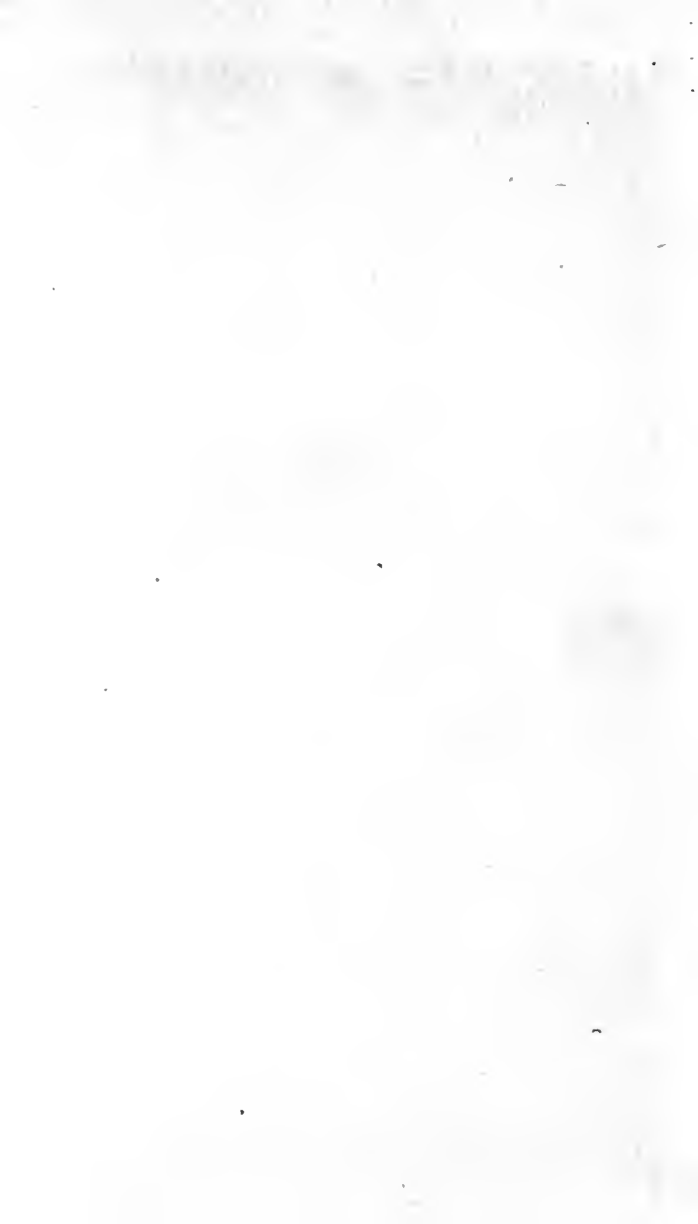




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**MARLBOROUGH**  
**AND OTHER POEMS**

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Charles H. Sorkin

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# MARLBOROUGH

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

CHARLES HAMILTON SORLEY

*Fourth Edition*

CAMBRIDGE

AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1919

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*Fourth edition, re-arranged and re-set, May 1919*

## PREFACE

THE call for a new edition of these poems gives an opportunity for issuing them in a form which is intended to be definitive.

They are now arranged in four groups according to subject. It is true that all of them perhaps might be described by the title of one of these groups, as poems of life and thought. But some owe their inspiration directly to nature—to the wind-swept downs which the author loved and which he looked upon as “wise” as well as “wide”; a few reflect the experiences of school life; yet others show how his spirit faced the great adventure of war and death. Within each group the poems are printed, as nearly as may be, in the order of their composition, the title-poem being restored to its proper chronological place. When the date, exact or approximate, is known, it has been given; in those cases in which the date specifies the day of the month, it has been taken from the author’s manuscript.

A single piece of imaginative prose is included amongst the poems. Other passages of prose were added to the third edition with the view of illustrating ideas occurring in the poems and prominent in the author’s mind. With the exception of a

few sentences from an early essay, these prose passages are all taken from familiar letters. To the present edition a few notes have been appended, in which some topical allusions are explained and what is known about the origin of the separate pieces is told.

The frontispiece is from a drawing in chalks by Mr Cecil Jameson.

Of the author personally, and of what he was to his family and his friends, I do not speak. Yet I may quote the phrase used by a German lady in whose house he had been living for three months. "The time with him," she wrote, "was like a holiday and a feast-day." Many have felt what she put into words: though it was the graver moods of his mind that, for the most part, sought expression in his poems. I may also put on record here the main facts concerning his short life.

He was born at Old Aberdeen on 19th May 1895. His father was then a professor in the University of Aberdeen, and he was of Scottish descent on both sides. From 1900 onwards his home was in Cambridge. He was educated at Marlborough College, which he entered in September 1908 and left in December 1913, after obtaining a scholarship at University Collège, Oxford. Owing to the war he never went into residence at the University. After leaving school he spent a little more than six months in Germany, first at Schwerin in Mecklenburg and afterwards, for the summer

session, at the University of Jena. He was on a walking tour on the banks of the Moselle when the European war broke out. He was put in prison at Trier on the 2nd August, but released the same night with orders to leave the country. After some adventures he reached home on the 6th, and at once applied for a commission in the army. He was gazetted Second Lieutenant in the Seventh (Service) Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment before the end of the month, Lieutenant in November, and Captain in the following August. He was sent to France with his battalion on 30th May 1915, and served for some months in the trenches round Ploegsteert. Shortly after he had entered upon his life there, a suggestion was made to him about printing a slim volume of verse. But he put the suggestion aside as premature. "Besides," he added, "this is no time for oliveyards and vineyards, more especially of the small-holdings type. For three years or the duration of the war, let be." Four months later his warfare was accomplished. His battalion was moved south to take part in the battle of Loos, and he fell on 13th October 1915, in an attack in which the "hair-pin" trench near Hulluch was captured by his company. "Being made perfect in a little while, he fulfilled long years."

W. R. S.

CAMBRIDGE, *March* 1919



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## OF THE DOWNS



# I

## BARBURY CAMP

WE burrowed night and day with tools of lead,  
Heaped the bank up and cast it in a ring  
And hurled the earth above. And Caesar said,  
"Why, it is excellent. I like the thing."  
We, who are dead,  
Made it, and wrought, and Caesar liked the thing.

And here we strove, and here we felt each vein  
Ice-bound, each limb fast-frozen, all night long.  
And here we held communion with the rain  
That lashed us into manhood with its thong,  
Cleansing through pain.  
And the wind visited us and made us strong.

Up from around us, numbers without name,  
Strong men and naked, vast, on either hand  
Pressing us in, they came. And the wind came  
And bitter rain, turning grey all the land.  
That was our game,  
To fight with men and storms, and it was grand.

For many days we fought them, and our sweat  
Watered the grass, making it spring up green,  
Blooming for us. And, if the wind was wet,  
Our blood wetted the wind, making it keen  
With the hatred  
And wrath and courage that our blood had been.

So, fighting men and winds and tempests, hot  
With joy and hate and battle-lust, we fell  
Where we fought. And God said, "Killed at last  
then? What!  
Ye that are too strong for heaven, too clean for hell,  
(God said) stir not.  
This be your heaven, or, if ye will, your hell."

So again we fight and wrestle, and again  
Hurl the earth up and cast it in a ring.  
But when the wind comes up, driving the rain  
(Each rain-drop a fiery steed), and the mists rolling  
Up from the plain,  
This wild procession, this impetuous thing,

Hold us amazed. We mount the wind-cars, then  
Whip up the steeds and drive through all the world,  
Searching to find somewhere some brethren,  
Sons of the winds and waters of the world.  
We, who were men,  
Have sought, and found no men in all this world.

Wind, that has blown here always ceaselessly,  
Bringing, if any man can understand,  
Might to the mighty, freedom to the free;  
Wind, that has caught us, cleansed us, made us  
    grand,  
Wind that is we  
(We that were men)—make men in all this land,

That so may live and wrestle and hate that when  
They fall at last exultant, as we fell,  
And come to God, God may say, "Do you come then  
Mildly enquiring, is it heaven or hell?  
Why! Ye were men!  
Back to your winds and rains. Be these your heaven  
    and hell!"

24 *March* 1913

## II

### STONES

THIS field is almost white with stones  
That cumber all its thirsty crust.  
And underneath, I know, are bones,  
And all around is death and dust.

And if you love a livelier hue—  
O, if you love the youth of year,  
When all is clean and green and new,  
Depart. There is no summer here.

Albeit, to me there lingers yet  
In this forbidding stony dress  
The impotent and dim regret  
For some forgotten restlessness.

Dumb, imperceptibly astir,  
These relics of an ancient race,  
These men, in whom the dead bones were  
Still fortifying their resting-place.

Their field of life was white with stones;  
    Good fruit to earth they never brought.  
O, in these bleached and buried bones  
    Was neither love nor faith nor thought.

But like the wind in this bleak place,  
    Bitter and bleak and sharp they grew,  
And bitterly they ran their race,  
    A brutal, bad, unkindly crew:

Souls like the dry earth, hearts like stone,  
    Brains like that barren bramble-tree:  
Stern, sterile, senseless, mute, unknown—  
    But bold, O, bolder far than we!

14 *July* 1913

### III

## EAST KENNET CHURCH AT EVENING

I stood amongst the corn, and watched  
The evening coming down.  
The rising vale was like a queen,  
And the dim church her crown.

Crown-like it stood against the hills.  
Its form was passing fair.  
I almost saw the tribes go up  
To offer incense there.

And far below the long vale stretched.  
As a sleeper she did seem  
That after some brief restlessness  
Has now begun to dream.

(All day the wakefulness of men,  
Their lives and labours brief,  
Have broken her long troubled sleep.  
Now, evening brings relief.)

There was no motion there, nor sound.  
She did not seem to rise.  
Yet was she wrapping herself in  
Her grey of night-disguise.

For now no church nor tree nor fold  
Was visible to me:  
Only that fading into one  
Which God must sometimes see.

No coloured glory streaked the sky  
To mark the sinking sun.  
There was no redness in the west  
To tell that day was done.

Only, the greyness of the eve  
Grew fuller than before.  
And, in its fulness, it made one  
Of what had once been more.

There was much beauty in that sight  
That man must not long see.  
God dropped the kindly veil of night  
Between its end and me.

24 July 1913

## IV

### AUTUMN DAWN

AND this is morning. Would you think  
That this was the morning, when the land  
Is full of heavy eyes that blink  
Half-opened, and the tall trees stand  
Too tired to shake away the drops  
Of passing night that cling around  
Their branches and weigh down their tops:  
And the grey sky leans on the ground?  
The thrush sings once or twice, but stops  
Affrighted by the silent sound.  
The sheep, scarce moving, munches, moans.  
The slow herd mumbles, thick with phlegm.  
The grey road-mender, hacking stones,  
Is now become as one of them.  
Old mother Earth has rubbed her eyes  
And stayed, so senseless, lying down.  
Old mother is too tired to rise  
And lay aside her grey nightgown,  
And come with singing and with strength  
In loud exuberance of day,  
Swift-darting. She is tired at length,  
Done up, past bearing, you would say.

She'll come no more in lust of strife,  
In hedge's leap, and wild bird's cries,  
In winds that cut you like a knife,  
In days of laughter and swift skies,  
That palpably pulsate with life,  
With life that kills, with life that dies.  
But in a morning such as this  
Is neither life nor death to see,  
Only that state which some call bliss,  
Grey hopeless immortality.  
Earth is at length bedrid. She is  
Supinest of the things that be:  
And stilly, heavy with long years,  
Brings forth such days in dumb regret,  
Immortal days, that rise in tears,  
And cannot, though they strive to, set.

\* \* \* \* \*

The mists do move. The wind takes breath.  
The sun appeareth over there,  
And with red fingers hasteneth  
From Earth's grey bed the clothes to tear,  
And strike the heavy mist's dank tent.  
And Earth uprises with a sigh.  
She is astir. She is not spent.  
And yet she lives and yet can die.  
The grey road-mender from the ditch  
Looks up. He has not looked before.  
The stunted tree sways like the witch  
It was: 'tis living witch once more.

The winds are washen. In the deep  
Dew of the morn they've washed. The skies  
Are changing dress. The clumsy sheep  
Bound, and earth's many bosoms rise,  
And earth's green tresses spring and leap  
About her brow. The earth has eyes,  
The earth has voice, the earth has breath,  
As o'er the land and through the air,  
With wingéd sandals, Life and Death  
Speed hand in hand—that winsome pair!

16 *September* 1913

## V

### RETURN

STILL stand the downs so wise and wide?  
Still shake the trees their tresses grey?  
I thought their beauty might have died  
Since I had been away.

I might have known the things I love,  
The winds, the flocking birds' full cry,  
The trees that toss, the downs that move,  
Were longer things than I.

Lo, earth that bows before the wind,  
With wild green children overgrown,  
And all her bosoms, many-whinned,  
Receive me as their own.

The birds are hushed and fled: the cows  
Have ceased at last to make long moan.  
They only think to browse and browse  
Until the night is grown.

The wind is stiller than it was,  
And dumbness holds the closing day.  
The earth says not a word, because  
It has no word to say.

The dear soft grasses under foot  
Are silent to the listening ear.  
Yet beauty never can be mute,  
And some will always hear.

18 *September* 1913

## VI

### RICHARD JEFFERIES

(LIDDINGTON CASTLE)

I SEE the vision of the Vale  
Rise teeming to the rampart Down,  
The fields and, far below, the pale  
Red-roofédness of Swindon town.

But though I see all things remote,  
I cannot see them with the eyes  
With which ere now the man from Coate  
Looked down and wondered and was wise.

He knew the healing balm of night,  
The strong and sweeping joy of day,  
The sensible and dear delight  
Of life, the pity of decay.

And many wondrous words he wrote,  
And something good to man he showed,  
About the entering in of Coate,  
There, on the dusty Swindon road.

19 *September* 1913

## VII

J. B.

THERE'S still a horse on Granham hill,  
And still the Kennet moves, and still  
Four Miler sways and is not still.

But where is her interpreter?

The downs are blown into dismay,  
The stunted trees seem all astray,  
Looking for someone clad in grey  
And carrying a golf-club thing;

Who, then when he had lived among,  
Gave them what they desired, a tongue.  
Their words he gave them to be sung  
Perhaps were few, but they were true.

The trees, the downs, on either hand,  
Still stand, as he said they would stand.  
But look, the rain in all the land  
Makes all things dim with tears of him.

And recently the Kennet croons,  
And winds are playing widowed tunes.  
—He has not left our “toun o’ touns,”  
But taken it away with him!

*October 1913*

## VIII

### THE OTHER WISE MAN

(SCENE: *A valley with a wood on one side and a road running up to a distant hill: as it might be, the valley to the east of West Woods, that runs up to Oare Hill, only much larger. TIME: Autumn. Four wise men are marching hillward along the road.*)

#### ONE WISE MAN

I wonder where the valley ends?  
On, comrades, on.

#### ANOTHER WISE MAN

The rain-red road,  
Still shining sinuously, bends  
Leagues upwards.

#### A THIRD WISE MAN

To the hill, O friends,  
To seek the star that once has glowed  
Before us; turning not to right  
Nor left, nor backward once looking.  
Till we have clomb—and with the night  
We see the King.

ALL THE WISE MEN

The King! The King!

THE THIRD WISE MAN

Long is the road but—

A FOURTH WISE MAN

Brother, see,

There, to the left, a very aisle  
Composed of every sort of tree—

THE FIRST WISE MAN

Still onward—

THE FOURTH WISE MAN

Oak and beech and birch,  
Like a church, but homelier than church,  
The black trunks for its walls of tile;  
Its roof, old leaves; its floor, beech nuts;  
The squirrels its congregation—

THE SECOND WISE MAN

Tuts!

For still we journey—

THE FOURTH WISE MAN

But the sun weaves  
A water-web across the grass,  
Binding their tops. You must not pass  
The water cobweb.

### THE THIRD WISE MAN

Hush! I say.  
Onward and upward till the day—

### THE FOURTH WISE MAN

Brother, that tree has crimson leaves.  
You'll never see its like again.  
Don't miss it. Look, it's bright with rain—

### THE FIRST WISE MAN

O prating tongue. On, on.

### THE FOURTH WISE MAN

And there  
A toad-stool, nay, a goblin stool.  
No toad sat on a thing so fair.  
Wait, while I pluck—and there's—and here's  
A whole ring...what?...berries?

*(The Fourth Wise Man drops behind, botanizing )*

### THE WISEST OF THE REMAINING THREE WISE MEN

O fool!  
Fool, fallen in this vale of tears.  
His hand had touched the plough: his eyes  
Looked back: no more with us, his peers,  
He'll climb the hill and front the skies  
And see the Star, the King, the Prize.

But we, the seekers, we who see  
Beyond the mists of transiency—  
Our feet down in the valley still  
Are set, our eyes are on the hill.  
Last night the star of God has shone,  
And so we journey, up and on,  
With courage clad, with swiftness shod,  
All thoughts of earth behind us cast,  
Until we see the lights of God,  
—And what will be the crown at last?

### ALL THREE WISE MEN

On, on.

*(They pass on: it is already evening when the Other  
Wise Man limps along the road, still botanizing.)*

### THE OTHER WISE MAN

A vale of tears, they said!  
A valley made of woes and fears,  
To be passed by with muffled head  
Quickly. I have not seen the tears,  
Unless they take the rain for tears,  
And certainly the place is wet.  
Rain-laden leaves are ever licking  
Your cheeks and hands...I can't get on.  
There's a toad-stool that wants picking.  
There, just there, a little up,  
What strange things to look upon  
With pink hood and orange cup!

And there are acorns, yellow—green...  
They said the King was at the end.  
They must have been  
Wrong. For here, here, I intend  
To search for him, for surely here  
Are all the wares of the old year,  
And all the beauty and bright prize,  
And all God's colours meetly showed,  
Green for the grass, blue for the skies,  
Red for the rain upon the road;  
And anything you like for trees,  
But chiefly yellow, brown and gold,  
Because the year is growing old  
And loves to paint her children these.  
I tried to follow...but, what do you think?  
The mushrooms here are pink!  
And there's old clover with black polls,  
Black-headed clover, black as coals,  
And toad-stools, sleek as ink!  
And there are such heaps of little turns  
Off the road, wet with old rain:  
Each little vegetable lane  
Of moss and old decaying ferns,  
Beautiful in decay,  
Snatching a beauty from whatever may  
Be their lot, dark-red and luscious: till there pass'd  
Over the many-coloured earth a grey  
Film. It was evening coming down at last.  
And all things hid their faces, covering up  
Their peak or hood or bonnet or bright cup

In greyness, and the beauty faded fast,  
With all the many-coloured coat of day.  
Then I looked up, and lo! the sunset sky  
Had taken the beauty from the autumn earth.  
Such colour, O such colour, could not die.  
The trees stood black against such revelry  
Of lemon-gold and purple and crimson dye.  
And even as the trees, so I  
Stood still and worshipped, though by evening's  
    birth  
I should have capped the hills and seen the King.  
The King? The King?  
I must be miles away from my journey's end;  
The others must be now nearing  
The summit, glad. By now they wend  
Their way far, far, ahead, no doubt.  
I wonder if they've reached the end.  
If they have, I have not heard them shout.

1 December 1913

## IX

### MARLBOROUGH

#### I

CROUCHED where the open upland billows down  
Into the valley where the river flows,  
She is as any other country town,  
That little lives or marks or hears or knows.

And she can teach but little. She has not  
The wonder and the surging and the roar  
Of striving cities. Only things forgot  
That once were beautiful, but now no more,

Has she to give us. Yet to one or two  
She first brought knowledge, and it was for her  
To open first our eyes, until we knew  
How great, immeasurably great, we were.

I, who have walked along her downs in dreams,  
And known her tenderness, and felt her might,  
And sometimes by her meadows and her streams  
Have drunk deep-storied secrets of delight,

Have had my moments there, when I have been  
Unwittingly aware of something more,  
Some beautiful aspect, that I had seen  
With mute unspeculative eyes before;

Have had my times, when, though the earth did wear  
Her self-same trees and grasses, I could see  
The revelation that is always there,  
But somehow is not always clear to me.

## II

So, long ago, one halted on his way  
And sent his company and cattle on;  
His caravans trooped darkling far away  
Into the night, and he was left alone.

And he was left alone. And, lo, a man  
There wrestled with him till the break of day.  
The brook was silent and the night was wan.  
And when the dawn was come, he passed away.

The sinew of the hollow of his thigh  
Was shrunken, as he wrestled there alone.  
The brook was silent, but the dawn was nigh.  
The stranger named him Israel and was gone.

And the sun rose on Jacob; and he knew  
That he was no more Jacob, but had grown  
A more immortal vaster spirit, who  
Had seen God face to face, and still lived on.

The plain that seemed to stretch away to God,  
The brook that saw and heard and knew no fear,  
Were now the self-same soul as he who stood  
And waited for his brother to draw near.

For God had wrestled with him, and was gone.  
He looked around, and only God remained.  
The dawn, the desert, he and God were one.  
—And Esau came to meet him, travel-stained.

### III

So, there, when sunset made the downs look new  
And earth gave up her colours to the sky,  
And far away the little city grew  
Half into sight, new-visioned was my eye.

I, who have lived, and trod her lovely earth,  
Raced with her winds and listened to her birds,  
Have cared but little for their worldly worth  
Nor sought to put my passion into words.

But now it's different; and I have no rest  
Because my hand must search, dissect and spell  
The beauty that is better not expressed,  
The thing that all can feel, but none can tell.

1 March 1914

## X

### LE REVENANT

HE trod the oft-remembered lane  
    (Now smaller-seeming than before  
    When first he left his father's door  
For newer things), but still quite plain

(Though half-benighted now) upstood  
    Old landmarks, ghosts across the lane  
    That brought the Bygone back again:  
Shorn haystacks and the rooky wood;

The guide post, too, which once he clomb  
    To read the figures: fourteen miles  
    To Swindon, four to Clinton Stiles,  
And only half a mile to home:

And far away the one homestead, where—  
    Behind the day now not quite set  
    So that he saw in silhouette  
Its chimneys still stand black and bare—

He noticed that the trees were not  
So big as when he journeyed last  
That way. For greatly now he passed  
Striding above the hedges, hot

With hopings, as he passed by where  
A lamp before him glanced and stayed  
Across his path, so that his shade  
Seemed like a giant's moving there.

The dullness of the sunken sun  
He marked not, nor how dark it grew,  
Nor that strange flapping bird that flew  
Above: he thought but of the One....

He topped the crest and crossed the fence,  
Noticed the garden that it grew  
As erst, noticed the hen-house too  
(The kennel had been altered since).

It seemed so unchanged and so still.  
(Could it but be the past arisen  
For one short night from out of prison?)  
He reached the big-bowed window-sill,

Lifted the window sash with care,  
Then, gaily throwing aside the blind,  
Shouted. It was a shock to find  
That he was not remembered there.

At once he felt not all his pain,  
But murmuringly apologised,  
Turned, once more sought the undersized  
Blown trees, and the long lanky lane,

Wondering and pondering on, past where  
A lamp before him glanced and stayed  
Across his path, so that his shade  
Seemed like a giant's moving there.

## XI

### LOST

ACROSS my past imaginings  
Has dropped a blindness silent and slow.  
My eye is bent on other things  
Than those it once did see and know.

I may not think on those dear lands  
(O far away and long ago!)  
Where the old battered signpost stands  
And silently the four roads go

East, west, south and north,  
And the cold winter winds do blow.  
And what the evening will bring forth  
Is not for me nor you to know.

*December 1914*



OF SCHOOL



## XII

### RAIN

WHEN the rain is coming down,  
And all Court is still and bare,  
And the leaves fall wrinkled, brown,  
Through the kindly winter air,  
And in tattered flannels I  
'Sweat' beneath a tearful sky,  
And the sky is dim and grey,  
And the rain is coming down,  
And I wander far away  
From the little red-capped town:  
There is something in the rain  
That would bid me to remain:  
There is something in the wind  
That would whisper, "Leave behind  
All this land of time and rules,  
Land of bells and early schools.  
Latin, Greek and College food  
Do you precious little good.  
Leave them: if you would be free  
Follow, follow, after me!"

When I reach 'Four Miler's' height,  
And I look abroad again  
On the skies of dirty white  
And the drifting veil of rain,  
And the bunch of scattered hedge  
Dimly swaying on the edge,  
And the endless stretch of downs  
Clad in green and silver gowns;  
There is something in their dress  
Of bleak barren ugliness,  
That would whisper, "You have read  
Of a land of light and glory:  
But believe not what is said.  
'Tis a kingdom bleak and hoary,  
Where the winds and tempests call  
And the rain sweeps over all.  
Heed not what the preachers say  
Of a good land far away.  
Here's a better land and kind  
And it is not far to find."

Therefore, when we rise and sing  
Of a distant land, so fine,  
Where the bells for ever ring,  
And the suns for ever shine:  
Singing loud and singing grand,  
Of a happy far-off land,  
O! I smile to hear the song,  
For I know that they are wrong,

That the happy land and gay  
Is not very far away,  
And that I can get there soon  
Any rainy afternoon.

And when summer comes again,  
And the downs are dimpling green,  
And the air is free from rain,  
And the clouds no longer seen:  
Then I know that they have gone  
To find a new camp further on,  
Where there is no shining sun  
To throw light on what is done,  
Where the summer can't intrude  
On the fort where winter stood:  
—Only blown and drenching grasses,  
Only rain that never passes,  
Moving mists and sweeping wind,  
And I follow them behind!

*October 1912*

### XIII

## A TALE OF TWO CAREERS

### I SUCCESS

HE does not dress as other men,  
His 'kish' is loud and gay,  
His 'side' is as the 'side' of ten  
Because his 'barnes' are grey.

His head has swollen to a size  
Beyond the proper size for heads,  
He metaphorically buys  
The ground on which he treads.

Before his face of haughty grace  
The ordinary mortal cowers:  
A 'forty-cap' has put the chap  
Into another world from ours.

The funny little world that lies  
'Twixt High Street and the Mound  
Is just a swarm of buzzing flies  
That aimlessly go round:

If one is stronger in the limb  
Or better able to work hard,  
It's quite amusing to watch him  
Ascending heavenward.

But if one cannot work or play  
(Who loves the better part too well),  
It's really sad to see the lad  
Retained compulsorily in hell.

## II FAILURE

We are the wasters, who have no  
Hope in this world here, neither fame,  
Because we cannot collar low  
Nor write a strange dead tongue the same  
As strange dead men did long ago.

We are the weary, who begin  
The race with joy, but early fail,  
Because we do not care to win  
A race that goes not to the frail  
And humble: only the proud come in.

We are the shadow-forms, who pass  
Unheeded hence from work and play.  
We are to-day, but like the grass  
That to-day is, we pass away;  
And no one stops to say 'Alas!'

Though we have little, all we have  
We give our School. And no return  
We can expect for what we gave;  
No joys; only a summons stern,  
"Depart, for others entrance crave!"

As soon as she can clearly prove  
That from us is no hope of gain,  
Because we only bring her love  
And cannot bring her strength or brain,  
She tells us, "Go: it is enough."

She turns us out at seventeen,  
We may not know her any more,  
And all our life with her has been  
A life of seeing others score,  
While we sink lower and are mean.

We have seen others reap success  
Full-measure. None has come to us.  
Our life has been one failure. Yes,  
But does not God prefer it thus?  
God does not also praise success.

And for each failure that we meet,  
And for each place we drop behind,  
Each toil that holds our aching feet,  
Each star we seek and never find,  
God, knowing, gives us comfort meet.

The School we care for has not cared  
To cherish nor keep our names to be  
Memorials. God hath prepared  
Some better thing for us, for we  
His hopes have known, His failures shared.

*November 1912*

## XIV

### WHAT YOU WILL

O COME and see, it's such a sight,  
So many boys all doing right:  
To see them underneath the yoke,  
Blindfolded by the elder folk,  
Move at a most impressive rate  
Along the way that is called straight.  
O, it is comforting to know  
They're in the way they ought to go.  
But don't you think it's far more gay  
To see them slowly leave the way  
And limp and loose themselves and fall?  
O, that's the nicest thing of all.  
I love to see this sight, for then  
I know they are becoming men,  
And they are tiring of the shrine  
Where things are really not divine.

I do not know if it seems brave  
The youthful spirit to enslave,  
And hedge about, lest it should grow.  
I don't know if it's better so  
In the long end. I only know

That when I have a son of mine,  
He shan't be made to droop and pine,  
Bound down and forced by rule and rod  
To serve a God who is no God.  
But I'll put custom on the shelf  
And make him find his God himself.  
Perhaps he'll find him in a tree,  
Some hollow trunk, where you can see.  
Perhaps the daisies in the sod  
Will open out and show him God.  
Or will he meet him in the roar  
Of breakers as they beat the shore?  
Or in the spiky stars that shine?  
Or in the rain (where I found mine)?  
Or in the city's giant moan?  
—A God who will be all his own,  
To whom he can address a prayer  
And love him, for he is so fair,  
And see with eyes that are not dim  
And build a temple meet for him.

30 June 1913



**OF LIFE AND THOUGHT**



## XV

### A CALL TO ACTION

#### I

A THOUSAND years have passed away,  
Cast back your glances on the scene,  
Compare this England of to-day  
With England as she once has been.

Fast beat the pulse of living then:  
The hum of movement, throb of war,  
The rushing mighty sound of men  
Reverberated loud and far.

They girt their loins up and they trod  
The path of danger, rough and high;  
For Action, Action was their god,  
"Be up and doing" was their cry.

A thousand years have passed away;  
The sands of life are running low;  
The world is sleeping out her day;  
The day is dying—be it so.

A thousand years have passed amain;  
The sands of life are running thin;  
Thought is our leader—Thought is vain;  
Speech is our goddess—Speech is sin.

## II

It needs no thought to understand,  
No speech to tell, nor sight to see  
That there has come upon our land  
The curse of Inactivity.

We do not see the vital point  
That 'tis the eighth, most deadly, sin  
To wail, "The world is out of joint"—  
And not attempt to put it in.

We see the swollen stream of crime  
Flow hourly past us, thick and wide;  
We gaze with interest for a time,  
And pass by on the other side.

We see the tide of human sin  
Rush roaring past our very door,  
And scarcely one man plunges in  
To drag the drowning to the shore.

We, dull and dreamy, stand and blink,  
Forgetting glory, strength and pride,  
Half—listless watchers on the brink,  
Half—ruined victims of the tide.

### III

We question, answer, make defence,  
We sneer, we scoff, we criticize,  
We wail and moan our decadence,  
Enquire, investigate, surmise;

We preach and prattle, peer and pry  
And fit together two and two:  
We ponder, argue, shout, swear, lie—  
We will not, for we cannot, do.

Pale puny soldiers of the pen,  
Absorbed in this your inky strife,  
Act as of old, when men were men,  
England herself and life yet life.

*October 1912*

## XVI

### PEACE

THERE is silence in the evening when the long days  
cease,  
And a million men are praying for an ultimate  
release  
From strife and sweat and sorrow—they are praying  
for peace.  
But God is marching on.

Peace for a people that is striving to be free!  
Peace for the children of the wild wet sea!  
Peace for the seekers of the promised land—do we  
Want peace when God has none?

We pray for rest and beauty that we know we  
cannot earn,  
And ever are we asking for a honey-sweet return;  
But God will make it bitter, make it bitter, till we  
learn  
That with tears the race is run.

And did not Jesus perish to bring to men, not peace,  
But a sword, a sword for battle and a sword that  
should not cease?

Two thousand years have passed us. Do we still  
want peace

Where the sword of Christ has shone?

Yes, Christ perished to present us with a sword,  
That strife should be our portion and more strife  
our reward,

For toil and tribulation and the glory of the Lord  
And the sword of Christ are one.

If you want to know the beauty of the thing called  
rest,

Go, get it from the poets, who will tell you it is best  
(And their words are sweet as honey) to lie flat upon  
your chest

And sleep till life is gone.

I know that there is beauty where the low streams  
run,

And the weeping of the willows and the big sunk  
sun,

But I know my work is doing and it never shall be  
done,

Though I march for ages on.

Wild is the tumult of the long grey street,  
O, is it never silent from the tramping of their feet?  
Here, Jesus, is Thy triumph, and here the world's  
defeat,

For from here all peace has gone.

There's a stranger thing than beauty in the ceaseless  
city's breast,

In the throbbing of its fever—and the wind is in the  
west,

And the rain is driving forward where there is no  
rest,

For the Lord is marching on.

*December 1912*

## XVII

### THE RIVER

HE watched the river running black  
Beneath the blacker sky;  
It did not pause upon its track  
Of silent instancy;  
It did not hasten, nor was slack,  
But still went gliding by.

It was so black. There was no wind  
Its patience to defy.  
It was not that the man had sinned,  
Or that he wished to die.  
Only the wide and silent tide  
Went slowly sweeping by.

The mass of blackness moving down  
Filled full of dreams the eye;  
The lights of all the lighted town  
Upon its breast did lie;  
The tall black trees were upside down  
In the river phantasy.

He had an envy for its black  
Inscrutability;  
He felt impatiently the lack  
Of that great law whereby  
The river never travels back  
But still goes gliding by;

But still goes gliding by, nor clings  
To passing things that die,  
Nor shows the secrets that it brings  
From its strange source on high.  
And he felt "We are two living things  
And the weaker one is I."

He saw the town, that living stack  
Piled up against the sky.  
He saw the river running black  
On, on and on: O, why  
Could he not move along his track  
With such consistency?

He had a yearning for the strength  
That comes of unity:  
The union of one soul at length  
With its twin-soul to lie:  
To be a part of one great strength  
That moves and cannot die.

\* \* \* \* \*

He watched the river running black  
Beneath the blacker sky.  
He pulled his coat about his back,  
He did not strive nor cry.  
He put his foot upon the track  
That still went gliding by.

The thing that never travels back  
Received him silently.  
And there was left no shred, no wrack  
To show the reason why:  
Only the river running black  
Beneath the blacker sky.

*February 1913*

## XVIII

### THE SEEKERS

THE gates are open on the road  
That leads to beauty and to God.

Perhaps the gates are not so fair,  
Nor quite so bright as once they were,  
When God Himself on earth did stand  
And gave to Abraham His hand  
And led him to a better land.

For lo! the unclean walk therein,  
And those that have been soiled with sin.  
The publican and harlot pass  
Along: they do not stain its grass.  
In it the needy has his share,  
In it the foolish do not err.  
Yes, spurned and fool and sinner stray  
Along the highway and the way.

And what if all its ways are trod  
By those whom sin brings near to God?  
This journey soon will make them clean:  
Their faith is greater than their sin.

For still they travel slowly by  
Beneath the promise of the sky,  
Scorned and rejected utterly;  
Unhonoured; things of little worth  
Upon the highroads of this earth;  
Afflicted, destitute and weak:  
Nor find the beauty that they seek,  
The God they set their trust upon:  
—Yet still they march rejoicing on.

*March 1913*

## XIX

### ROOKS

THERE, where the rusty iron lies,  
The rooks are cawing all the day.  
Perhaps no man, until he dies,  
Will understand them, what they say.

The evening makes the sky like clay.  
The slow wind waits for night to rise.  
The world is half-content. But they

Still trouble all the trees with cries,  
That know, and cannot put away,  
The yearning to the soul that flies  
From day to night, from night to day.

21 *June* 1913

XX

ROOKS (II)

THERE is such cry in all these birds,  
More than can ever be express'd;  
If I should put it into words,  
You would agree it were not best  
To wake such wonder from its rest.

But since to-night the world is still  
And only they and I astir,  
We are united, will to will,  
By bondage tighter, tenderer  
Than any lovers ever were.

And if, of too much labouring,  
All that I see around should die  
(There is such sleep in each green thing,  
Such weariness in all the sky),  
We would live on, these birds and I.

Yet how? since everything must pass  
At evening with the sinking sun,  
And Christ is gone, and Barabbas,  
Judas and Jesus, gone, clean gone,  
Then how shall I live on?

Yet surely Judas must have heard  
Amidst his torments the long cry  
Of some lone Israelitish bird,  
And on it, ere he went to die,  
Thrown all his spirit's agony.

And that immortal cry which welled  
For Judas, ever afterwards  
Passion on passion still has swelled  
And sweetened, till to-night these birds  
Will take my words, will take my words,

And wrapping them in music meet  
Will sing their spirit through the sky,  
Strange and unsatisfied and sweet—  
That, when stock-dead am I, am I,  
O, these will never die!

*July 1913*

## XXI

### THE SONG OF THE UNGIRT RUNNERS

WE swing ungirded hips,  
And lightened are our eyes,  
The rain is on our lips,  
We do not run for prize.  
We know not whom we trust  
Nor whitherward we fare,  
But we run because we must  
Through the great wide air.

The waters of the seas  
Are troubled as by storm.  
The tempest strips the trees  
And does not leave them warm.  
Does the tearing tempest pause?  
Do the tree-tops ask it why?  
So we run without a cause  
'Neath the big bare sky.

The rain is on our lips,  
We do not run for prize.  
But the storm the water whips  
And the wave howls to the skies.  
The winds arise and strike it  
And scatter it like sand,  
And we run because we like it  
Through the broad bright land.

## XXII

### GERMAN RAIN

THE heat came down and sapped away my powers.  
The laden heat came down and drowned my brain,  
Till through the weight of overcoming hours  
I felt the rain.

Then suddenly I saw what more to see  
I never thought: old things renewed, retrieved.  
The rain that fell in England fell on me,  
And I believed.

## XXIII

### BRAND

THOU trod'st the shifting sand path where man's  
race is.

The print of thy soft sandals is still clear.  
I too have trodden it those prints a-near,  
But the sea washes out my tired foot-traces.  
And all that thou hast healed and holpen here  
I yearned to heal and help and wipe the tear  
Away. But still I trod unpeopled spaces.  
I had no twelve to follow my pure paces.  
For I had thy misgivings and thy fear,  
Thy crown of scorn, thy suffering's sharp spear,  
Thy hopes, thy longings—only not thy dear  
Love (for my crying love would no man hear),  
Thy will to love, but not thy love's sweet graces,  
That deep firm foothold which no sea erases.  
I think that thou wast I in bygone places  
In an intense eliminated year.  
Now born again in days that are more drear  
I wander unfulfilled: and see strange faces.

## XXIV

### PEER GYNT

WHEN he was young and beautiful and bold  
We hated him, for he was very strong.  
But when he came back home again, quite old,  
And wounded too, we could not hate him long.

For kingliness and conquest pranced he forth  
Like some high-stepping charger bright with foam.  
And south he strode and east and west and north  
With need of crowns and never need of home.

Enraged we heard high tidings of his strength  
And cursed his long forgetfulness. We swore  
That should he come back home some eve at length,  
We would deny him, we would bar the door!

And then he came. The sound of those tired feet!  
And all our home and all our hearts are his,  
Where bitterness, grown weary, turns to sweet,  
And envy, purged by longing, pity is.

And pillows rest beneath the withering cheek,  
And hands are laid the battered brows above,  
And he whom we had hated, waxen weak,  
First in his weakness learns a little love.

## XXV

### TO POETS

WE are the homeless, even as you,  
Who hope and never can begin.  
Our hearts are wounded through and through  
Like yours, but our hearts bleed within.  
We too make music, but our tones  
'Scape not the barrier of our bones.

We have no comeliness like you.  
We toil, unlovely, and we spin.  
We start, return: we wind, undo:  
We hope, we err, we strive, we sin,  
We love: your love's not greater, but  
The lips of our love's might stay shut.

We have the evil spirits too  
That shake our soul with battle-din.  
But we have an eviller spirit than you,  
We have a dumb spirit within:  
The exceeding bitter agony  
But not the exceeding bitter cry.

*September 1914*

## XXVI

IF I have suffered pain  
It is because I would.  
I willed it. 'Tis no good  
To murmur or complain.  
I have not served the law  
That keeps the earth so fair  
And gives her clothes to wear,  
Raiment of joy and awe.

For all, that bow to bless  
That law, shall sure abide.  
But man shall not abide,  
And hence his gloriousness.  
Lo, evening earth doth lie  
All-beauteous and all peace.  
Man only does not cease  
From striving and from cry.

Sun sets in peace: and soon  
The moon will shower her peace.  
O law-abiding moon,  
You hold your peace in fee!  
Man, leastways, will not be  
Down-bounden to these laws.  
Man's spirit sees no cause  
To serve such laws as these.

There yet are many seas  
For man to wander in.  
He yet must find out sin,  
If aught of pleasance there  
Remain for him to store,  
His roving to increase,  
In quest of many a shore  
Forbidden still to fare.

Peace sleeps the earth upon,  
And sweet peace on the hill.  
The waves that whimper still  
At their long law-serving  
(O flowing sad complaint!)  
Come on and are back drawn.  
Man only owns no king,  
Man only is not faint.

You see, the earth is bound.  
You see, the man is free.  
For glorious liberty  
He suffers and would die.  
Grudge not then suffering  
Or chastisement cry.  
O let his pain abound,  
Earth's truant and earth's king!

## XXVII

### WHOM THEREFORE WE IGNORANTLY WORSHIP

THESE things are silent. Though it may be told  
Of luminous deeds that lighten land and sea,  
Strong sounding actions with broad minstrelsy  
Of praise, strange hazards and adventures bold,  
We hold to the old things that grow not old:  
Blind, patient, hungry, hopeless (without fee  
Of all our hunger and unhope are we),  
To the first ultimate instinct, to God we hold.

They flicker, glitter, flicker. But we bide,  
We, the blind weavers of an intense fate,  
Asking but this—that we may be denied:  
Desiring only desire insatiate,  
Unheard, unnamed, unnoticed, crucified  
To our unutterable faith, we wait.

*September 1914*

## XXVIII

### DEUS LOQUITUR

THAT'S what I am: a thing of no desire,  
With no path to discover and no plea  
To offer up, so be my altar fire  
May burn before the hearth continuously,  
To be  
For wayward men a steadfast light to see.

They know me in the morning of their days,  
But ere noontide forsake me, to discern  
New lore and hear new riddles. But moonrays  
Bring them back footsore, humble, bent, a-burn  
To turn  
And warm them by my fire which they did spurn.

They flock together like tired birds. "We sought  
Full many stars in many skies to see,  
But ever knowledge disappointment brought.  
Thy light alone, Lord, burneth steadfastly."  
Ah me!  
Then it is I who fain would wayward be.

## EXPECTANS EXPECTAVI

FROM morn to midnight, all day through,  
I laugh and play as others do,  
I sin and chatter, just the same  
As others with a different name.

And all year long upon the stage  
I dance and tumble and do rage  
So vehemently, I scarcely see  
The inner and eternal me.

I have a temple I do not  
Visit, a heart I have forgot,  
A self that I have never met,  
A secret shrine—and yet, and yet

This sanctuary of my soul  
Unwitting I keep white and whole,  
Unlatched and lit, if Thou should'st care  
To enter or to tarry there.

With parted lips and outstretched hands  
And listening ears Thy servant stands,  
Call Thou early, call Thou late,  
To Thy great service dedicate.

*May 1915*

OF WAR AND DEATH



### XXX

ALL the hills and vales along  
Earth is bursting into song,  
And the singers are the chaps  
Who are going to die perhaps.

O sing, marching men,  
Till the valleys ring again.  
Give your gladness to earth's keeping,  
So be glad, when you are sleeping.

Cast away regret and rue,  
Think what you are marching to.  
Little live, great pass.  
Jesus Christ and Barabbas  
Were found the same day.  
This died, that went his way.

So sing with joyful breath,  
For why, you are going to death.  
Teeming earth will surely store  
All the gladness that you pour.

Earth that never doubts nor fears,  
Earth that knows of death, not tears,  
Earth that bore with joyful ease  
Hemlock for Socrates,  
Earth that blossomed and was glad  
'Neath the cross that Christ had,  
Shall rejoice and blossom too  
When the bullet reaches you.

Wherefore, men marching  
On the road to death, sing!  
Pour your gladness on earth's head,  
So be merry, so be dead.

From the hills and valleys earth  
Shouts back the sound of mirth,  
Tramp of feet and lilt of song  
Ringing all the road along.  
All the music of their going,  
Ringing swinging glad song-throwing,  
Earth will echo still, when foot  
Lies numb and voice mute.

On, marching men, on  
To the gates of death with song.  
Sow your gladness for earth's reaping,  
So you may be glad, though sleeping.  
Strew your gladness on earth's bed,  
So be merry, so be dead.

## XXXI

### TO GERMANY

You are blind like us. Your hurt no man designed,  
And no man claimed the conquest of your land.  
But gropers both through fields of thought confined  
We stumble and we do not understand.  
You only saw your future bigly planned,  
And we, the tapering paths of our own mind,  
And in each other's dearest ways we stand,  
And hiss and hate. And the blind fight the blind.

When it is peace, then we may view again  
With new-won eyes each other's truer form  
And wonder. Grown more loving-kind and warm  
We'll grasp firm hands and laugh at the old pain,  
When it is peace. But until peace, the storm  
The darkness and the thunder and the rain.

## XXXII

A HUNDRED thousand million mites we go  
Wheeling and tacking o'er the eternal plain,  
Some black with death—and some are white with  
    woe.

Who sent us forth? Who takes us home again?

And there is sound of hymns of praise—to whom?  
And curses—on whom curses?—snap the air.  
And there is hope goes hand in hand with gloom,  
And blood and indignation and despair.

And there is murmuring of the multitude  
And blindness and great blindness, until some  
Step forth and challenge blind Vicissitude  
Who tramples on them: so that fewer come.

And nations, ankle-deep in love or hate,  
Throw darts or kisses all the unwitting hour  
Beside the ominous unseen tide of fate;  
And there is emptiness and drink and power.

And some are mounted on swift steeds of thought  
And some drag sluggish feet of stable toil.  
Yet all, as though they furiously sought,  
Twist turn and tussle, close and cling and coil.

A hundred thousand million mites we sway  
Writhing and tossing on the eternal plain,  
Some black with death—but most are bright with  
Day!  
Who sent us forth? Who brings us home again?

—*September 1914*

## XXXIII

### TWO SONNETS

#### I

SAINTS have adored the lofty soul of you.  
Poets have whitened at your high renown.  
We stand among the many millions who  
Do hourly wait to pass your pathway down.  
You, so familiar, once were strange: we tried  
To live as of your presence unaware.  
But now in every road on every side  
We see your straight and steadfast signpost there.

I think it like that signpost in my land,  
Hoary and tall, which pointed me to go  
Upward, into the hills, on the right hand,  
Where the mists swim and the winds shriek and  
    blow,

A homeless land and friendless, but a land  
I did not know and that I wished to know.

Such, such is Death: no triumph: no defeat:  
 Only an empty pail, a slate rubbed clean,  
 A merciful putting away of what has been.

And this we know: Death is not Life effete,  
 Life crushed, the broken pail. We who have seen  
 So marvellous things know well the end not yet.

Victor and vanquished are a-one in death:  
 Coward and brave: friend, foe. Ghosts do not say  
 "Come, what was your record when you drew  
 breath?"

But a big blot has hid each yesterday  
 So poor, so manifestly incomplete.  
 And your bright Promise, withered long and sped,  
 Is touched, stirs, rises, opens and grows sweet  
 And blossoms and is you, when you are dead.

12 June 1915

## XXXIV

WHEN you see millions of the mouthless dead  
Across your dreams in pale battalions go,  
Say not soft things as other men have said,  
That you'll remember. For you need not so.  
Give them not praise. For, deaf, how should they  
know

It is not curses heaped on each gashed head?  
Nor tears. Their blind eyes see not your tears flow.  
Nor honour. It is easy to be dead.  
Say only this, "They are dead." Then add thereto,  
"Yet many a better one has died before."  
Then, scanning all the o'ercrowded mass, should you  
Perceive one face that you loved heretofore,  
It is a spook. None wears the face you knew.  
Great death has made all his for evermore.

## XXXV

THERE is such change in all those fields,  
Such motion rhythmic, ordered, free,  
Where ever-glancing summer yields  
Birth, fragrance, sunlight, immanency,  
To make us view our rights of birth.  
What shall we do? How shall we die?  
We, captives of a roaming earth,  
'Mid shades that life and light deny.  
Blank summer's surfeit heaves in mist;  
Dumb earth basks dewy-washed; while still  
We whom Intelligence has kissed  
Do make us shackles of our will.  
And yet I know in each loud brain,  
Round-clamped with laws and learning so,  
Is madness more and lust of strain  
Than earth's jerked godlings e'er can know.  
The false Delilah of our brain  
Has set us round the millstone going.  
O lust of roving! lust of pain!  
Our hair will not be long in growing.  
Like blinded Samson round we go.  
We hear the grindstone groan and cry.  
Yet we are kings, we know, we know.  
What shall we do? How shall we die?

Take but our pauper's gift of birth,  
O let us from the grindstone free!  
And tread the maddening gladdening earth  
In strength close-braced with purity.  
The earth is old; we ever new.  
Our eyes should see no other sense  
Than this, eternally to do—  
Our joy, our task, our recompense;  
Up unexploréd mountains move,  
Track tireless through great wastes afar,  
Nor slumber in the arms of love,  
Nor tremble on the brink of war;  
Make Beauty and make Rest give place,  
Mock Prudence loud—and she is gone,  
Smite Satisfaction on the face  
And tread the ghost of Ease upon.  
Light-lipped and singing press we hard  
Over old earth which now is worn,  
Triumphant, buffeted and scarred,  
By billows howled at, tempest-torn,  
Toward blue horizons far away  
(Which do not give the rest we need,  
But some long strife, more than this play,  
Some task that will be stern indeed)—  
We ever new, we ever young,  
We happy creatures of a day!  
What will the gods say, seeing us strung  
As nobly and as taut as they?

## XXXVI

I HAVE not brought my Odyssey  
With me here across the sea;  
But you'll remember, when I say  
How, when they went down Sparta way,  
To sandy Sparta, long ere dawn  
Horses were harnessed, rations drawn,  
Equipment polished sparkling bright,  
And breakfasts swallowed (as the white  
Of Eastern heavens turned to gold)—  
The dogs barked, swift farewells were told.  
The sun springs up, the horses neigh,  
Crackles the whip thrice—then away!  
From sun-go-up to sun-go-down  
All day across the sandy down  
The gallant horses galloped, till  
The wind across the downs more chill  
Blew, the sun sank and all the road  
Was darkened, that it only showed  
Right at the end the town's red light  
And twilight glimmering into night.

The horses never slackened till  
They reached the doorway and stood still.  
Then came the knock, the unlading; then  
The honey-sweet converse of men,

The splendid bath, the change of dress,  
Then—O the grandeur of their Mess,  
The henchmen, the prim stewardess!  
And O the breaking of old ground,  
The tales, after the port went round!  
(The wondrous wiles of old Odysseus,  
Old Agamemnon and his misuse  
Of his command, and that young chit  
Paris—who didn't care a bit  
For Helen—only to annoy her  
He did it really, κ.τ.λ.)

But soon they led amidst the din  
The honey-sweet ἀοιδὸς in,  
Whose eyes were blind, whose soul had sight,  
Who knew the fame of men in fight—  
Bard of white hair and trembling foot,  
Who sang whatever God might put  
Into his heart.

And there he sung,  
Those war-worn veterans among,  
Tales of great war and strong hearts wrung,  
Of clash of arms, of council's brawl,  
Of beauty that must early fall,  
Of battle hate and battle joy  
By the old windy walls of Troy.  
They felt that they were unreal then,  
Visions and shadow-forms, not men.  
But those the Bard did sing and say  
(Some were their comrades, some were they)

Took shape and loomed and strengthened more  
Greatly than they had guessed of yore.

And now the fight begins again,  
The old war-joy, the old war-pain.  
Sons of one school across the sea  
We have no fear to fight—

\* \* \* \* \*

And soon, O soon, I do not doubt it,  
With the body or without it,  
We shall all come tumbling down  
To our old wrinkled red-capped town.  
Perhaps the road up Ilsley way,  
The old ridge-track, will be my way.  
High up among the sheep and sky,  
Look down on Wantage, passing by,  
And see the smoke from Swindon town;  
And then full left at Liddington,  
Where the four winds of heaven meet  
The earth-blest traveller to greet.  
And then my face is toward the south,  
There is a singing on my mouth:  
Away to rightward I descry  
My Barbury ensconced in sky,  
Far underneath the Ogbourne twins,  
And at my feet the thyme and whins,  
The grasses with their little crowns  
Of gold, the lovely Aldbourne downs,  
And that old signpost (well I knew  
That crazy signpost, arms askew,

Old mother of the four grass ways).  
And then my mouth is dumb with praise,  
For, past the wood and chalkpit tiny,  
A glimpse of Marlborough ἐρατεινή!  
So I descend beneath the rail  
To warmth and welcome and wassail.

\* \* \* \* \*

This from the battered trenches—rough,  
Jingling and tedious enough.  
And so I sign myself to you:  
One, who some crooked pathways knew  
Round Bedwyn: who could scarcely leave  
The Downs on a December eve:  
Was at his happiest in shorts,  
And got—not many good reports!  
Small skill of rhyming in his hand—  
But you'll forgive—you'll understand.

12 July 1915

XXXVII  
IN MEMORIAM

S.C.W., V.C.

THERE is no fitter end than this.  
No need is now to yearn nor sigh.  
We know the glory that is his,  
A glory that can never die.

Surely we knew it long before,  
Knew all along that he was made  
For a swift radiant morning, for  
A sacrificing swift night-shade.

8 *September* 1915

## XXXVIII

### BEHIND THE LINES

WE are now at the end of a few days' rest, a kilometre behind the lines. Except for the farmyard noises (new style) it might almost be the little village that first took us to its arms six weeks ago. It has been a fine day, following on a day's rain, so that the earth smells like spring. I have just managed to break off a long conversation with the farmer in charge, a tall thin stooping man with sad eyes, in trouble about his land: les Anglais stole his peas, trod down his corn and robbed his young potatoes: he told it as a father telling of infanticide. There may have been fifteen francs' worth of damage done; he will never get compensation out of those shifty Belgian burgomasters; but it was not exactly the fifteen francs but the invasion of the soil that had been his for forty years, in which the weather was his only enemy, that gave him a kind of Niobe's dignity to his complaint.

Meanwhile there is the usual evening sluggishness. Close by, a quickfirer is pounding away its allowance of a dozen shells a day. It is like a cow coughing. Eastward there begins a sound (all

sounds begin at sundown and continue intermittently till midnight, reaching their zenith at about 9 p.m. and then dying away as sleepiness claims their masters)—a sound like a motor-cycle race—thousands of motor-cycles tearing round and round a track, with cut-outs out: it is really a pair of machine guns firing. And now one sound awakens another. The old cow coughing has started the motor-bykes: and now at intervals of a few minutes come express trains in our direction: you can hear them rushing toward us; they pass going straight for the town behind us: and you hear them begin to slow down as they reach the town: they will soon stop: but no, every time, just before they reach it, is a tremendous railway accident. At least, it must be a railway accident, there is so much noise, and you can see the dust that the wreckage scatters. Sometimes the train behind comes very close, but it too smashes on the wreckage of its forerunners. A tremendous cloud of dust, and then the groans. So many trains and accidents start the cow coughing again: only another cow this time, somewhere behind us, a tremendous-sized cow, *θαυμάσιον ὄσον*, with awful whooping-cough. It must be a buffalo: this cough must burst its sides. And now someone starts sliding down the stairs on a tin tray, to soften the heart of the cow, make it laugh and cure its cough. The din he makes is appalling. He is beating the tray with a broom now, every two minutes a stroke: he has certainly

stopped the cow by this time, probably killed it. He will leave off soon (thanks to the "shell tragedy"): we know he can't last.

It is now almost dark: come out and see the fireworks. While waiting for them to begin you can notice how pale and white the corn is in the summer twilight: no wonder with all this whooping-cough about. And the motor-cycles: notice how all these races have at least a hundred entries: there is never a single cycle going. And why are there no birds coming back to roost? Where is the lark? I haven't heard him all to-day. He must have got whooping-cough as well, or be staying at home through fear of the cow. I think it will rain to-morrow, but there have been no swallows circling low, stroking their breasts on the full ears of corn. Anyhow, it is night now, but the circus does not close till twelve. Look! there is the first of them! The fireworks are beginning. Red flares shooting up high into the night, or skimming low over the ground, like the swallows that are not: and rockets bursting into stars. See how they illumine that patch of ground a mile in front. See it, it is deadly pale in their searching light: ghastly, I think, and featureless except for two big lines of eyebrows ashy white, parallel along it, raised a little from its surface. Eyebrows. Where are the eyes? Hush, there are no eyes. What those shooting flares illumine is a mole. A long thin mole. Burrowing by day, and shoving a timorous enquiring snout

above the ground by night. Look, did you see it? No, you cannot see it from here. But were you a good deal nearer, you would see behind that snout a long and endless row of sharp shining teeth. The rockets catch the light from these teeth and the teeth glitter: they are silently removed from the poison-spitting gums of the mole. For the mole's gums spit fire and, they say, send something more concrete than fire darting into the night. Even when its teeth are off. But you cannot see all this from here: you can only see the rockets and then for a moment the pale ground beneath. But it is quite dark now.

And now for the fun of the fair! You will hear soon the riding-master crack his whip—why, there it is. Listen, a thousand whips are cracking, whipping the horses round the ring. At last! The fun of the circus is begun. For the motor-cycle team race has started off again: and the whips are cracking all: and the waresman starts again, beating his loud tin tray to attract the customers: and the cows in the cattle-show start coughing, coughing: and the firework display is at its best: and the circus specials come one after another bearing the merry-makers back to town, all to the inevitable crash, the inevitable accident. It can't last long: these accidents are so frequent, they'll all get soon killed off, I hope. Yes, it is diminishing. The train service is cancelled (and time too): the cows have stopped coughing: and the cycle race is done. Only

the kids who have bought new whips at the fair continue to crack them: and unused rockets that lie about the ground are still sent up occasionally. But now the children are being driven off to bed: only an occasional whip-crack now (perhaps the child is now the sufferer): and the tired showmen going over the ground pick up the rocket-sticks and dead flares. At least I suppose this is what must be happening: for occasionally they still find one that has not gone off and send it up out of mere perversity. Else what silence!

It must be midnight now. Yes, it is midnight. But before you go to bed, bend down, put your ear against the ground. What do you hear? "I hear an endless tapping and a tramping to and fro: both are muffled: but they come from everywhere. Tap, tap, tap: pick, pick, pick: tra-mp, tra-mp, tra-mp." So you see the circus-goers are not all gone to sleep. There is noise coming from the womb of earth, noise of men who tap and mine and dig and pass to and fro on their watch. What you have seen is the foam and froth of war: but underground is labour and throbbing and long watch. Which will one day bear their fruit. They will set the circus on fire. Then what pandemonium! Let us hope it will not be to-morrow!

15 July 1915

## ILLUSTRATIONS IN PROSE



RICHARD JEFFERIES (p. 15)

I AM sweatily struggling to the end of *Faust II*, where Goethe's just showing off his knowledge. I am also reading a very interesting book on Goethe and Schiller; very adoring it is, but it lets out quite unconsciously the terrible dryness of their entirely intellectual friendship and (Goethe's at least) entirely intellectual life. If Goethe really died saying "more light," it was very silly of him: what *he* wanted was more warmth. G. and S. apparently made friends, on their own confession, merely because their ideas and artistic ideals were the same, which fact ought to be the very first to make them bore one another.

All this is leading to the following conclusion. The Germans can act Shakespeare, have good beer and poetry, but their prose is cobwebby stuff. Hence I want to read some good prose again. Also it is summer. And for a year or two I had always laid up "The Pageant of Summer" as a treat for a hot July. In spite of all former vows of celibacy in the way of English, now's the time. So, unless the cost of book-postage here is ruinous, could you send me a small volume of Essays by Richard Jefferies called *The Life of the Fields*, the first essay in the series being the Pageant of Summer? No

particular hurry, but I should be amazingly grateful if you'll send it (it's quite a little book), especially as I presume the pageant of summer takes place in that part of the country where I should be now had — had a stronger will than you. In the midst of my setting up and smashing of deities—Masefield, Hardy, Goethe—I always fall back on Richard Jefferies wandering about in the background. I have at least the tie of locality with him. (*July 1914*)

I've given up German prose altogether. It's like a stale cake compounded of foreign elements. So I have laid in a huge store of Richard Jefferies for the rest of July, and read him none the less voraciously because we are countrymen. (I know it's wrong of me, but I count myself as Wiltshire....) When I die (in sixty years) I am going to leave all my presumably enormous fortune to Marlborough on condition that a thorough knowledge of Richard Jefferies is ensured by the teaching there. I think it is only right considering we are bred upon the self-same hill. It would also encourage Naturalists and discourage cricketers....

But, in any case, I'm not reading so much German as I did ought to. I dabble in their modern poetry, which is mostly of the morbidly religious kind. The language is massively beautiful, the thought is rich and sleek, the air that of the inside of a church. Magnificent artists they are,

with no inspiration, who take religion up as a very responsive subject for art, and mould it in their hands like sticky putty. There are magnificent parts in it, but you can imagine what a relief it was to get back to Jefferies and Liddington Castle. (July 1914)

## II

IBSEN (pp. 61, 62)

Ibsen's last, *John Gabriel Borkman*, is a wonderfully fine play, far better than any others by Ibsen that I have read or seen, but I can imagine it would lose a good deal in an English translation. The acting of the two middle-aged sisters who are the protagonists was marvellous. The men were a good deal more difficult to hear, but also very striking. Next to the fineness of the play (which has far more poetry in it than any others of his I've read, though of course there's a bank in the background, as there always seems to be in Ibsen)—the apathy of the very crowded house struck me most. There was very little clapping at the end of the acts: at the end of the play none, which was just as well because one of them was dead and would have had to jump up again. So altogether I am very much struck by my first German theatre, though the fineness of the play may have much to do with it. It was just a little spoilt by the last Act being in a pine forest on a hill with sugar that was meant to look like snow. This rather took away from the effect of the scene,

which in the German is one of the finest things I have ever heard, possessing throughout a wonderful rhythm which may or may not exist in the original. What a beautiful language it can be! (13 February 1914)

I have been reading many criticisms of *John Gabriel Borkman*, and it strikes me more and more that it is the most remarkable play I have ever read. It is head and shoulders above the others of Ibsen's I know: a much broader affair. John Gabriel Borkman is a tremendous character. His great desire, which led him to overstep the law for one moment, and of course he was caught and got eight years, was "Menschenglück zu schaffen<sup>1</sup>." One moment Ibsen lets you see one side of his character (the side he himself saw) and you see the Perfect Altruist: the next moment the other side is turned, and you see the Complete Egoist. The play all takes place in the last three hours of J. G. B.'s life, and in these three hours his real love, whom he had rejected for business reasons and married her twin-sister, shows him for the first time the Egoist that masqueraded all its life as Altruist. The technique is perfect and it bristles with minor problems. It is absolutely fair, for if J. G. B. had sacrificed his ideals and married the right twin, he would not have been deserted after his disgrace. And the way that during the three hours the whole past history of the man comes

<sup>1</sup> To bring about human happiness.

out is marvellous. The brief dialogue between the sisters which closes the piece is fine, and suddenly throws a new light on the problem of how the tragedy could have been evaded, when you thought all that could be said had been said. (20 February 1914)

I feel that this visit to Schwerin will spoil me for the theatre for the rest of my life. I have never ceased to see *John Gabriel Borkman* mentally since my second visit to it (when the acting was even finer than before and struck me as a perfect presentation of a perfect play). My only regret was that the whole family wasn't there as well. I should so like to talk it over with you, and the way that at the very end of his last play Ibsen sums up the object against which all his battle was directed: "Es war viel mehr die Kälte die ihn tötete." "Die Kälte, sagst du, die Kälte! die hat ihn schon längst getötet."... "Ja, die Herzenskälte<sup>1</sup>." (10 April 1914)

[The play] at the Königliches Schauspielhaus<sup>2</sup> [Berlin] was Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* with Grieg's incidental music—the Northern Faust, as it is called: though the mixture of allegory and reality is not carried off so successfully as in the Southern Faust.

<sup>1</sup> "It was rather the cold that killed him." "The cold, say you, the cold! Why, that killed him long ago."... "Yes, coldness of heart."

<sup>2</sup> Royal Theatre.

Peer Gynt has the advantage of being a far more human and amiable creature, and not a cold fish like Faust. I suppose that difference is also to be found in the characters of the respective authors. I always wanted to know why Faust had no relations to make demands on him. Peer Gynt is a charmingly light piece, with an irresistible mixture of fantastical poetry and a very racy humour. The scene where Peer returns to his blind and dying mother and, like a practical fellow, instead of sentimentalizing, sits himself on the end of her bed, persuades her it is a chariot and rides her up to heaven, describing the scenes on the way, the surliness of St Peter at the gate, the appearance of God the Father, who "put Peter quite in the shade" and decided to let mother Aasa in, was delightful. The acting was of course perfect. (5 June 1914)

### III

#### THE ODYSSEY (p. 81)

The *Odyssey* is a great joy when once you can read it in big chunks and not a hundred lines at a time, being [forced] to note all the silly grammatical strangenesses. I could not read it in better surroundings for the whole tone of the book is so thoroughly German and domestic. A friend of sorts of the ——— died lately; and when the Frau attempted to break the news to Karl at table, he immediately said "Don't tell me anything sad while I'm eating." That very afternoon I came across someone in the

*Odyssey* who made, under the same circumstances, precisely the same remark<sup>1</sup>. In the *Odyssey* and in Schwerin alike they are perfectly unaffected about their devotion to good food. In both too I find the double patriotism which suffers not a bit from its duplicity—in the *Odyssey* to their little Ithaca as well as to Achaea as a whole; here equally to the Kaiser and the pug-nosed Grand Duke. In both is the habit of longwinded anecdotage in the same rambling irrelevant way, and the quite unquenchable hospitality. And the Helen of the *Odyssey* bustling about a footstool for Telemachus or showing off her new presents (she had just returned from a jaunt to Egypt)—a washing-tub, a spindle, and a work-basket that ran on wheels (think!)—is the perfect German Hausfrau. (27 March 1914)

If I had the smallest amount of patience, steadiness or concentrative faculty, I could write a brilliant book comparing life in Ithaca, Sparta and holy Pylos in the time of Odysseus with life in Mecklenburg-Schwerin in the time of Herr Dr ——. In both you get the same unquenchable hospitality and perfectly unquenchable anecdotage faculty. In both whenever you make a visit or go into a house, they are “busying themselves with a meal.” Du lieber Karl (I mean Herr Dr —) has three times, when his wife has tried to talk of death, disease or crime [at] table, unconsciously given a literal trans-

<sup>1</sup> *Odyssey*, IV, 193, 194.

lation of Peisistratus's sound remark οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ γε τέρπομ' ὀδυρόμενος μεταδόρπιος<sup>1</sup>—and that is their attitude to meals throughout. Need I add the ἀγλαὰ δῶρα<sup>2</sup> they insist on giving their guests, with the opinion that it is the host that is the indebted party and the possession of a guest confers honour and responsibility: and their innate patriotism, the οὐ τοι ἐγὼ γε ἧς γαίης δύναμαι γλυκερώτερον ἄλλο ἰδέσθαι<sup>3</sup> spirit (however dull it is)—to complete the parallel? So I am really reading it in sympathetic surroundings, and when I have just got past the part where Helen shows off to Menelaus her new work-basket that runs on wheels, and the Frau rushes in to show me her new water-can with a spout designed to resemble a pig—I see the two are made from the same stuff (I mean, of course, Helen and Frau —, not Frau — and the pig). Also, I enjoy being able to share in a quiet amateur way with Odysseus his feelings about “were it but the smoke leaping up from his own land.” (23 April 1914)

Good luck to Helen of Troy. As you say, she loved her own sex as well. Her last appearance in Homer is when Telemachus was just leaving her and Menelaus after paying them a visit in Sparta, “and she stood on the doorstep with a robe in her

<sup>1</sup> I do not like having to lament during supper.—*Odyssey*, IV, 193, 194.

<sup>2</sup> Splendid gifts.

<sup>3</sup> I for my part can see nothing sweeter than one's own country.—*Odyssey*, IX, 27, 28.

hand and spoke a word and called him, 'I also am giving thee a gift, dear child,—this, a memorial of Helen's handiwork, against the day of thy marriage to which we all look forward, that thou mayest give it to thy wife: till then, let it be stored in thy palace under thy mother's care.'” But she never gives to me the impression in Homer of being quite happy. I'm sure she was always dull down in Sparta with fatherly old Menelaus—though she never showed it of course. But there is always something a little wistful in her way of speaking. She only made other people happy and consequently another set of other people miserable. One of the best things in the *Iliad* is the way you are made to feel (without any statement) that Helen fell really in love with Hector—and this shows her good taste, for of all the Homeric heroes Hector is the only unselfish man. She seems to me only to have loved to please Menelaus and Paris but to have really loved Hector—and naturally, for Hector and Achilles, the altruist and the egoist, were miles nobler than any one else on either side—but Hector never gave any sign that he regarded her as anything more than his distressed sister-in-law. But after Hector's death she must have left part of her behind her, and made a real nice wife to poor pompous Menelaus in his old age. She seems to have had a marvellous power of adaptability. (*April 1914*)

I made my pilgrimage on Saturday, when, though

I had to get up with the lark to hear the energetic old Eucken lecture at 7 a.m., I had no lecture after 10, and went straight off to Weimar. I spent the rest of the morning (actually) in the museum, inspecting chiefly Preller's wall-paintings of the *Odyssey*. They are the best criticism of the book I have seen and gave me a new and more pleasant idea of Odysseus. Weimar does not give the same impression of musty age as parts of Jena. It seems a flourishing well-watered town, and I should like very much to live there, chiefly for the sake of the park. The name "Park" puts one off, but it is really a beautiful place like a college garden on an extensive scale. After I had wandered about there very pleasantly for an hour or so, I noticed a statue in a prominent position above me. "Another Goethe," thought I; but I looked at it again, and it had not that look of self-confident self-conscious greatness that all the Goethes have. So I went up to it and recognised a countryman—looking down from this height on Weimar, with one eye half-closed and an attitude of head expressing amused and tolerant but penetrating interest. It was certainly the first satisfactory representation of Shakespeare I have ever seen. It appears quite new, but I could not discover the sculptor's name. The one-eye-half-closed trick was most effective; you thought "this is a very humorous kindly human gentleman"—then you went round to the other side and saw the open eye! (8 May 1914)

## IV

### GERMANY (p. 73)

In the evening I am generally to be found avoiding a certain insincere type of German student, who hunts me down ostensibly to "tie a bond of good-comradeship," but really to work up facts about what "England" thinks. Such people of undeveloped individuality tell me in return what "wir Deutschen<sup>1</sup>" think, in a touching national spirit, which would have charmed Plato. But they don't charm me. Indeed I see in them the very worst result of 1871. They have no idea beyond the "State," and have put me off Socialism for the rest of my life. They are not the kind of people, as [the Irish R.M.] puts it, "you could borrow half-a-crown to get drunk with." But such is only a small proportion and come from the north and west; they just show how Sedan has ruined one type of German, for I'm sure the German nature is the nicest in the world, as far as it is not warped by the German Empire. I like their lack of reserve and self-consciousness, our two national virtues. They all write poetry and recite it with gusto to any three hours' old acquaintance. We all write poetry too in England, but we write it on the bedroom wash-stand and lock the bedroom door, and disclaim it vehemently in public. (2 June 1914)

<sup>1</sup> We Germans.

The two great sins people impute to Germany are that she says that might is right and bullies the little dogs. But I don't think she means that might *qua* might is right, but that confidence of superiority is right, and by superiority she means spiritual superiority. She said to Belgium, "We enlightened thinkers see that it is necessary to the world that all opposition to Deutsche Kultur should be crushed. As citizens of the world you must assist us in our object and assert those higher ideas of world-citizenship which are not bound by treaties. But if you oppose us, we have only one alternative." That, at least, is what the best of them would have said; only the diplomats put it rather more brusquely. She was going on a missionary voyage with all the zest of Faust—

Er wandle so den Erdentag entlang;  
Wenn Geister spuken, geh' er seinen Gang;  
Im Weiterschreiten find' er Qual und Glück,  
Er, unbefriedigt jeden Augenblick!<sup>1</sup>

—and missionaries know no law....

So it seems to me that Germany's only fault (and I think you often commented on it in those you met) is a lack of real insight and sympathy with those who differ from her. We are not fighting a bully, but a bigot. They are a young nation and don't yet see that what they consider is being done for the good of the world may be really being done for self-gratification—like X. who, under pretence

<sup>1</sup> *Faust*, II, 6820-3, translated in the last four lines of verse on p. III.

of informing the form, dropped into the habit of parading his own knowledge. X. incidentally did the form a service by creating great amusement for it, and so is Germany incidentally doing the world a service (though not in the way it meant) by giving them something to live and die for, which no country but Germany had before. If the bigot conquers he will learn in time his mistaken methods (for it is only of the methods and not of the goal of Germany that one can disapprove)—just as the early Christian bigots conquered by bigotry and grew larger in sympathy and tolerance after conquest. I regard the war as one between sisters, between Martha and Mary, the efficient and intolerant against the casual and sympathetic. Each side has a virtue for which it is fighting, and each that virtue's supplementary vice. And I hope that whatever the material result of the conflict, it will purge these two virtues of their vices, and efficiency and tolerance will no longer be incompatible.

But I think that tolerance is the larger virtue of the two, and efficiency must be her servant. So I am quite glad to fight against this rebellious servant. In fact I look at it this way. Suppose my platoon were the world. Then my platoon sergeant would represent efficiency and I would represent tolerance. And I always take the sternest measures to keep my platoon sergeant in check! I fully appreciate the wisdom of the War Office when they put inefficient officers to rule sergeants. Adsit omen.

Now you know what Sorley thinks about it. And do excuse all his gassing. I know I already overdosed you on those five splendid days between Coblenz and Neumagen. But I've seen the Fatherland (I like to call it the Fatherland, for in many families Papa represents efficiency and Mamma tolerance—but don't think I'm W.S.P.U.) so horribly misrepresented that I've been burning to put in my case for them to a sympathetic ear. Wir sind gewiss Hamburger Jungen, as that lieber besoffener Österreicher told us<sup>1</sup>. And so we must stand up for them, even while trying to knock them down. (October 1914)

On return to England, by the way, I renewed my acquaintance with Robert Browning. The last line of *Mr Sludge the Medium*—"yet there is something in it, tricks and all"—converted me, and since then I have used no other. I wish we could recall him from the stars and get him to write a Dramatic Idyll or something, giving a soliloquy of the feelings and motives and quick changes of heat and cold that must be going through the poor Kaiser's mind at present. He would really show that impartial sympathy for him, which the British press and public so doltishly deny him, when in talk and comment they deny him even the rights of a human being. R. B. could do it perfectly—or Shakespeare.

<sup>1</sup> To be sure we are Hamburg lads, as that dear old tipsy Austrian told us.

I think the Kaiser not unlike Macbeth, with the military clique in Prussia as his Lady Macbeth, and the court flatterers as the three weird sisters. He'll be a splendid field for dramatists and writers in days to come. (*October 1914*)

It [a magazine article] brought back to me that little crooked old fellow that H. and I met at the fag-end of our hot day's walk as we swung into Neumagen. His little face was lit with a wild uncertain excitement he had not known since 1870, and he advanced towards us waving his stick and yelling at us "Der Krieg ist los, Junge<sup>1</sup>," just as we might be running to watch a football match and he was come to tell us we must hurry up for the game had begun. And then the next night on the platform at Trier, train after train passing crowded with soldiers bound for Metz: varied once or twice by a truck-load of "swarthier alien crews," thin old women like wineskins, with beautiful and piercing faces, and big heavy men and tiny aged-looking children: Italian colonists exiled to their country again. Occasionally one of the men would jump out to fetch a glass of water to relieve their thirst in all that heat and crowding. The heat of the night is worse than the heat of the day, and geistige Getränke were verboten<sup>2</sup>. Then the train would slowly move out into the darkness that led to Metz

<sup>1</sup> "The war's begun, lad."

<sup>2</sup> Spirituous drinks were forbidden.

and an exact reproduction of it would steam in and fill its place: and we watched the signal on the southward side of Trier, till the lights should give a jump and the finger drop and let in the train which was to carry us out of that highly-strung and thrilling land.

At Cologne I saw a herd of some thirty American school-marms whom I had assisted to entertain at Eucken's just a fortnight before. I shouted out to them, but they were far too upset to take any notice, but went bobbing into one compartment and out again and into another like people in a cinematograph. Their haste anxiety and topsyturviness were caused by thoughts of their own safety and escape, and though perfectly natural contrasted so strangely with all the many other signs of haste perturbation and distress that I had seen, which were much quieter and stronger and more full-bodied than that of those Americans, because it was the Vaterland and not the individual that was darting about and looking for the way and was in need: and the silent submissive unquestioning faces of the dark uprooted Italians peering from the squeaking trucks formed a fitting background—Cassandra from the backmost car looking steadily down on Agamemnon as he stepped from his triumphal purple chariot and Clytemnestra offered him her hand. (23 November 1914)

It is surprising how very little difference a total change of circumstances and prospects makes in

the individual. The German (I know from the 48 hours of the war that I spent there) is radically changed, and until he is sent to the front, his one dream and thought will be how quickest to die for his country. He is able more clearly to see the tremendous issues, and changes accordingly. I don't know whether it is because the English are more phlegmatic or more shortsighted or more egoistic or what, that makes them inwardly and outwardly so far less shaken by the war than at first seemed probable. The German, I am sure, during the period of training "dies daily" until he is allowed to die. We go there with our eyes shut. (28 November 1914)

We had a very swinging Christmas—one that makes one realize (in common with other incidents of the war) how near savages we are and how much the stomach (which Nietzsche calls the Father of Melancholy) is also the best procurer of enjoyment. We gave the men a good church (plenty of loud hymns), a good dinner (plenty of beer), and the rest of the day was spent in sleep. I saw then very clearly that whereas for the upper classes Christmas is a spiritual debauch in which one remembers for a day to be generous and cheerful and open-handed, it is only a more or less physical debauch for the poorer classes, who need no reminder, since they are generous and cheerful and open-handed all the year round. One has fairly good chances of observ-

ing the life of the barrack-room, and what a contrast to the life of a house in a public school! The system is roughly the same: the house-master or platoon-commander entrusts the discipline of his charge to prefects or corporals, as the case may be. They never open their mouths in the barrack-room without the introduction of the unprintable swear-words and epithets: they have absolutely no "morality" (in the narrower, generally accepted sense): yet the public school boy should live among them to learn a little Christianity: for they are so extraordinarily nice to one another. They live in and for the present: we in and for the future. So they are cheerful and charitable always: and we often niggardly and unkind and spiteful. In the gymnasium at Marlborough, how the few clumsy specimens are ragged and despised and jeered at by the rest of the squad; in the gymnasium here you should hear the sounding cheer given to the man who has tried for eight weeks to make a long-jump of eight feet and at last by the advice and assistance of others has succeeded. They seem instinctively to regard a man singly, at his own rate, by his own standards and possibilities, not in comparison with themselves or others: that's why they are so far ahead of us in their treatment and sizing up of others.

It's very interesting, what you say about Athens and Sparta, and England and Germany. Curious, isn't it, that in old days a nation fought another for

land or money: now we are fighting Germany for her spiritual qualities—thoroughness, and fearlessness of effort, and effacement of the individual. I think that Germany, in spite of her vast bigotry and blindness, is in a kind of way living up to the motto that Goethe left her in the closing words of *Faust*, before he died.

Ay, in this thought is my whole life's persistence,  
This is the whole conclusion of the true:  
He only earns his Freedom, owns Existence,  
Who every day must conquer her anew!  
So let him journey through his earthly day,  
Mid hustling spirits, go his self-found way,  
Find torture, bliss, in every forward stride,  
He, every moment still unsatisfied!<sup>1</sup>

A very close parallel may be drawn between *Faust* and present history (with Belgium as Gretchen). And *Faust* found spiritual salvation in the end!  
(27 December 1914)

## V

"MANY A BETTER ONE" (p. 78)

——'s death was a shock. Still, since Achilles' *κάτθανε καὶ Πάτροκλος ὃ περ σέο πολλὸν ἀμείνων*<sup>2</sup>, which should be read at the grave of every corpse in addition to the burial service, no saner and splendor comment on death has been made, especially, as here, where it seemed a cruel waste.  
(28 November 1914)

<sup>1</sup> *Faust*, II, 6944-7, 6820-3.

<sup>2</sup> Died Patroclus too who was a far better man than thou.—*Iliad*, XXI, 107.

## VI

### "BLANK SUMMER'S SURFEIT" (p. 79)

From the time that the May blossom is scattered till the first frosts of September, one is always at one's worst. Summer is stagnating: there is no more spring (in both senses) anywhere. When the corn is grown and the autumn seed not yet sown, it has only to bask in the sun, to fatten and ripen: a damnable time for man, heaven for the vegetables. And so I am sunk deep in "Denkfaulheit<sup>1</sup>," trying to catch in the distant but incessant upper thunder of the air promise of October rainstorms: long runs clad only in jersey and shorts over the Marlborough downs, cloaked in rain, as of yore: likewise, in the aimless toothless grumbling of the guns, promise of a great advance to come: hailstones and coals of fire. (*July 1915*)

## VII

### "ETERNALLY TO DO" (p. 80)

Masefield has founded a new school of poetry and given a strange example to future poets; and this is wherein his greatness and originality lies: that he is a man of action not imagination. For he has one of the fundamental qualities of a great poet—a thorough enjoyment of life. He has it in a more pre-eminent degree than even Browning, perhaps the stock instance of a poet who was great because he

<sup>1</sup> Mental lethargy.

liked life. Everyone has read the latter's lines about "the wild joys of living, the leaping from rock up to rock." These are splendid lines: but one somehow does not feel that Browning ever leapt from rock up to rock himself. He saw other people doing it, doubtless, and thought it fine. But I don't think he did it himself ever....

Masefield writes that he knows and testifies that he has seen. Throughout his poems there are lines and phrases so instinct with life, that they betoken a man who writes of what he has experienced, not of what he thinks he can imagine: who has braved the storm, who has walked in the hells, who has seen the reality of life: who does not, like Tennyson, shut off the world he has to write about, attempting to imagine shipwrecks from the sofa, or battles in his bed. Compare for instance *Enoch Arden* and *Dauber*. One is a dream: the other, life....

The sower, who reaps not, has found a voice at last—a harsh rough voice, compelling, strong, triumphant. Let us, the reapers where we have not sown, give ear to it. Are they not much better than we? The voice of our poets and men of letters is finely trained and sweet to hear; it teems with sharp saws and rich sentiment: it is a marvel of delicate technique: it pleases, it flatters, it charms, it soothes: it is a living lie. The voice of John Masefield rings rough and ill trained: it tells a story, it leaves the thinking to the reader, it gives him no dessert of sentiment, cut, dried,—and ready made

to go to sleep on: it jars, it grates, it makes him wonder; it is full of hope and faith and power and strife and God. Till Mr Masfield came on earth, the poetry of the world had been written by the men who lounged, who looked on. It is sin in a man to write of the world before he has known the world, and the failing of every poet up till now has been that he has written of what he loved to imagine but dared not to experience. But Masfield writes that he knows and testifies that he has seen; with him expression is the fruit of action, the sweat of a body that has passed through the fire.

We stand by the watershed of English poetry; for the vastness and wonder of modern life has demanded that men should know what they write about. Behind us are the poets of imagination; before us are the poets of fact. For Masfield as a poet may be bad or good: I think him good, but you may think him bad: but, good or bad, he has got this quality which no one can deny and few belittle. He is the first of a multitude of coming poets (so I trust and pray) who are men of action before they are men of speech and men of speech because they are men of action. Those whom, because they do not live in our narrow painted groove, we call the Lower Classes, it is they who truly know what life is: so to them let us look for the true expression of life. One has already arisen, and his name is Masfield. We await the coming of others in his train. (*Essay on Masfield*, 3 November 1912)

The war is a chasm in time. . . In a job like this, one lives in times a year ago—and a year hence, alternately. Keine Nachricht<sup>1</sup>. A large amount of organized disorderliness, killing the spirit. A vagueness and a dullness everywhere: an unromantic sitting still 100 yards from Brother Bosch. There's something rotten in the state of something. One feels it but cannot be definite of what. Not even is there the premonition of something big impending: gathering and ready to burst. None of that feeling of confidence, offensiveness, "personal ascendancy," with which the reports so delight our people at home. Mutual helplessness and lassitude, as when two boxers who have battered each other crouch dancing two paces from each other, waiting for the other to hit. Improvised organization, with its red hat, has muddled out romance. It is not the strong god of the Germans—that makes their Prussian Beamter<sup>2</sup> so bloody and their fight against fearful odds so successful. Our organization is like a nasty fat old frowsy cook dressed up in her mistress's clothes: fussy, unpopular, and upstart: trailing the scent of the scullery behind her. In periods of rest we are billeted in a town of sewage farms, mean streets, and starving cats: delightful population: but an air of late June weariness. For Spring again! This is not Hell as I hoped, but Limbo Lake with green growths on the water, full of minnows.

So one lives in a year ago—and a year hence.

<sup>1</sup> No news.

<sup>2</sup> Official.

What are your feet doing, a year hence? . . . where, while riding in your Kentish lanes, are you riding twelve months hence? I am sometimes in Mexico, selling cloth: or in Russia, doing Lord knows what: in Serbia or the Balkans: in England, never. England remains the dream, the background: at once the memory and the ideal. Sorley is the Gaelic for wanderer. I have had a conventional education: Oxford would have corked it. But this has freed the spirit, glory be. Give me the *Odyssey*, and I return the New Testament to store. Physically as well as spiritually, give me the road.

Only sometimes the horrible question of bread and butter shadows the dream: it has shadowed many, I should think. It must be tackled. But I always seek to avoid the awkward, by postponing it.

You figure in these dreams as the pioneer-sergeant. Perhaps *you* are the Odysseus, I am but one of the dog-like *ἑταῖροι*<sup>1</sup>. . . But however that may be, our lives will be *πολύπλευστοι*<sup>2</sup>, though our paths may be different. And we will be buried by the sea—

Timon will make his everlasting mansion  
Upon the beachéd verge of a salt flood,  
Which twice a day with his embosséd froth  
The turbulent surge shall cover.

Details can wait—perhaps for ever. These are the plans. (16 June 1915)

<sup>1</sup> Comrades.

<sup>2</sup> Far-roaming.

## VIII

### "THE GRANDEUR OF THEIR MESS" (p. 82)

I am bleached with chalk and grown hairy. And I think exultantly and sweetly of the one or two or three outstandingly admirable meals of my life. One in Yorkshire, in an inn upon the moors, with a fire of logs and ale and tea and every sort of Yorkshire bakery, especially bears me company. And yet another in Mecklenburg-Schwerin (where they are very English) in a farm-house utterly at peace in broad fields sloping to the sea. I remember a tureen of champagne in the middle of the table to which we helped ourselves with ladles! I remember my hunger after three hours' ride over the country: and the fishing-town of Wismar lying like an English town on the sea. In that great old farm-house where I dined at 3 p.m. as the May day began to cool, fruit of sea and of land joined hands together, fish fresh caught and ducks fresh killed: it was a wedding of the elements. It was perhaps the greatest meal I have had ever, for everything we ate had been alive that morning—the champagne was alive yet. We feasted like kings till the sun sank, for it was impossible to overeat. 'Twas Homeric and its memory fills many hungry hours. (5 October 1915)

## IX

"THE OLD WAR-JOY, THE OLD WAR-PAIN" (p. 83).

This is a little hamlet, smelling pleasantly of manure. I have never felt more restful. We arrived at dawn: white dawn across the plane trees and coming through the fields of rye. After two hours in an oily ship and ten in a grimy train, the "war area" was a haven of relief. These French trains shriek so: there is no sight more desolating than abandoned engines passing up and down the lines, hooting in their loneliness. There is something eerie in a railway by night.

But this is perfect. The other officers have heard the heavy guns and perhaps I shall soon. They make perfect cider in this valley: still, like them. There are clouds of dust along the roads, and in the leaves: but the dust here is native and caressing and pure, not like the dust of Aldershot, gritted and fouled by motors and thousands of feet. 'Tis a very Limbo lake: set between the tireless railways behind and twenty miles in front the fighting. Drink its cider and paddle in its rushy streams: and see if you care whether you die to-morrow. It brings out a new part of oneself, the loiterer, neither scorning nor desiring delights, gliding listlessly through the minutes from meal-time to meal-time, like the stream through the rushes: or stagnant and smooth like their cider, unfathomably gold: beauti-

ful and calm without mental fear. And in four-score hours we will pull up our braces and fight. These hours will have slipped over me, and I shall march hotly to the firing-line, by turn critic, actor, hero, coward, and soldier of fortune: perhaps even for a moment Christian, humble, with "Thy will be done." Then shock, combustion, the emergence of one of these: death or life: and then return to the old rigmarole. I imagine that this, while it may or may not knock about your body, will make very little difference to you otherwise.

A speedy relief from Chatham. There is vibration in the air when you hear "The Battalion will move across the water on....."

The moon won't rise till late, but there is such placid weariness in all the bearing earth, that I must go out to see. I have not been "auf dem Lande<sup>1</sup>" for many years: man muss den Augenblick geniessen<sup>2</sup>. (1 June 1915)

Your letter arrived and awoke the now drifting ME to consciousness. I had understood and acquiesced in your silence. The re-creation of that self which one is to a friend is an effort: repaying if it succeeds, but not to be forced. Wherefore, were it not for the dangers dancing attendance on the adjourning type of mind—which a year's military training has not been able to efface from me—I

<sup>1</sup> In the country.

<sup>2</sup> One must enjoy the passing moment.

should not be writing to you now. For it is just after breakfast—and you know what breakfast is: putter to sleep of all mental energy and discontent: charmer, sedative, leveller: maker of Britons. I should wait till after tea when the indiscriminating sun has shown his back—a fine back—on the world, and oneself by the aid of tea has thrown off the mental sleep of heat. But after tea I am on duty. So with bacon in my throat and my brain like a poached egg I will try to do you justice....

I wonder how long it takes the King's Pawn, who so proudly initiates the game of chess, to realize that he is a pawn. Same with us. We are finding out that we play the unimportant if necessary part. At present a dam, untested, whose presence not whose action stops the stream from approaching: and then—a mere handle to steel: dealers of death which we are not allowed to plan. But I have complained enough before of the minion state of the "damned foot." It is something to have no responsibility—an inglorious ease of mind....

Health—and I don't know what ill-health is—invites you so much to smooth and shallow ways: where a happiness may only be found by renouncing the other happiness of which one set out in search. Yet here there is enough to stay the bubbling surface stream. Looking into the future one sees a holocaust somewhere: and at present there is—thank God—enough of "experience" to keep the wits edged (a callous way of putting it, perhaps).

But out in front at night in that no-man's land and long graveyard there is a freedom and a spur. Rustling of the grasses and grave tap-tapping of distant workers: the tension and silence of encounter, when one struggles in the dark for moral victory over the enemy patrol: the wail of the exploded bomb and the animal cries of wounded men. Then death and the horrible thankfulness when one sees that the next man is dead: "We won't have to *carry* him in under fire, thank God; dragging will do": hauling in of the great resistless body in the dark: the smashed head rattling: the relief, the relief that the thing has ceased to groan: that the bullet or bomb that made the man an animal has now made the animal a corpse. One is hardened by now: purged of all false pity: perhaps more selfish than before. The spiritual and the animal get so much more sharply divided in hours of encounter, taking possession of the body by swift turns. (26 August 1915)

The chess players are no longer waiting so infernal long between their moves. And the patient pawns are all in movement, hourly expecting further advances—whether to be taken or reach the back lines and be queened. 'Tis sweet, this pawn-being: there are no cares, no doubts: wherefore no regrets. The burden which I am sure is the parent of ill-temper drunkenness and premature old age—to wit, the making up of one's own mind—is lifted

from our shoulders. I can now understand the value of dogma, which is the General Commander-in-chief of the mind. I am now beginning to think that free thinkers should give their minds into subjection, for we who have given our actions and volitions into subjection gain such marvellous rest thereby. Only of course it is the subjecting of their powers of will and deed to a wrong master on the part of a great nation that has led Europe into war. Perhaps afterwards I and my likes will again become indiscriminate rebels. For the present we find high relief in making ourselves soldiers. (5 October 1915)

## X

“PERHAPS THE ROAD UP ILSLEY WAY,  
THE OLD RIDGE-TRACK, WILL BE MY WAY”  
(p. 83)

No! When I next come down to Marlborough it shall be an entry worthy of the place and of the enterer. Not in khaki, with gloves and a little cane, with creased trousers from Aldershot—“dyed garments from Bozrah”—but in grey bags, an old coat and a knapsack, coming over the downland from Chiseldon, putting up at the Sun! Then after a night there and a tattered stroll through the High Street, feeling perhaps the minor inconveniences of complete communion with Nature, I should put on a gentlemanly suit and crave admittance at your door, talk old scandal, search old House-books,

swank in Court and sing in Chapel and be a regular O.M.: retaining always the right on Monday afternoon (it always rains on Mondays in Marlborough) to sweat round Barbury and Totterdown, what time you dealt out nasty little oblong unseens to the Upper VI. This would be my Odyssey. At present I am too cornered by my uniform for any such luxuries. (*May 1915*)

There is really very little to say about the life here. Change of circumstance, I find, means little compared to change of company. And as one has gone out and is still with the same officers with whom one had rubbed shoulders unceasingly for the last nine months, and of whom one had acquired that extraordinarily intimate knowledge which comes of constant *συνουσία*<sup>1</sup>, one does not notice the change: until one or two or three drop off. And one wonders why.

They are extraordinarily close, really, these friendships of circumstance, distinct as they remain from friendships of choice.... Only, I think, once or twice does one stumble across that person into whom one fits at once: to whom one can stand naked, all disclosed. But circumstance provides the second best: and I'm sure that any gathering of men will in time lead to a very very close half-friendship between them all (I only say half-friendship because I wish to distinguish it from the other).

<sup>1</sup> Companionship.

So there has really been no change in coming over here: the change is to come when half of this improvised "band of brothers" are wiped away in a day. We are learning to be soldiers slowly—that is to say, adopting the soldierly attitude of complete disconnection with our job during odd hours. No shop. So when I think I should tell you "something about the trenches," I find I have neither the inclination nor the power.

This however. On our weekly march from the trenches back to our old farmhouse a mile or two behind, we leave the communication-trench for a road, hedged on one side only, with open ploughland to the right. It runs a little down hill till the road branches. Then half left up over open country goes our track, with the ground shelving away to the right of us. Can you see it? The Toll House to the First Post on Trainers Down on a small scale. There is something in the way that at the end of the hedge the road leaps up to the left into the beyond that puts me in mind of Trainers Down. It is what that turn into unhedged country and that leap promises, not what it achieves, that makes the likeness. It is nothing when you get up, no wildness, no openness. But there it remains to cheer me on each relief....

I hear that a *very* select group of public schools will by this time be enjoying the Camp "somewhere in England." May they not take it too seriously! Seein' as 'ow all training is washed out as soon as

you turn that narrow street corner at Boulogne, where some watcher with a lantern is always up for the English troops arriving, with a "Bon courage" for every man.

A year ago to-day—but that way madness lies.  
(4 *August* 1915)



## NOTES

P. 3 (I). Barbury Camp is on the northern escarpment of the Marlborough downs, between five and six miles north by west from Marlborough. The camp on the summit is of pre-Roman origin. The preference for rain and windy weather, shown in this and other poems in the book, has suggested the poem entitled "Sorley's Weather" by Captain Robert Graves (*Fairies and Fusiliers*, 1917) which ends with the verse,

Yet rest there, Shelley, on the sill,  
For though the winds come frorely  
I'm away to the rain-blown hill  
And the ghost of Sorley.

P. 6 (II). Printed in *The Marlburian*, 28 July 1913. In this case, and in a few other cases, the text in the book varies slightly from that given in *The Marlburian*. In these variations the author's manuscript has been followed.

P. 8 (III). *The Marlburian*, 3 December 1913. East Kennet is a village on the Kennet between four and five miles west of Marlborough. A correspondent, who is familiar with the district, thinks that the church seen by the author from the cornfield was not that of East Kennet but the neighbouring church of West Overton.

P. 10 (IV). *The Marlburian*, 9 October 1913. This poem, said the author, in sending a copy of it home from Germany, "has too much copy from Meredith in it, but I value it as being (with 'Return') a memorial of my walk to Marlborough last September" (1913). The scenery of this walk is recalled in xxxvi (pp. 83, 84). P. 11, line 2: *hedge's, bird's*; the apostrophe was misplaced in editions 1 to 3.

P. 15 (VI). *The Marlburian*, 9 October 1913. This poem is a result of the same walk as iv and v. Liddington Castle is about seven miles north by east from

Marlborough and, like Barbury Camp, guards the northern frontier of the downs. Describing a walk three months before, the author wrote, "I then scaled Liddington Castle, which is no more a castle than I am, but a big hill with a fine Roman camp on the top, and a view all down the Vale of the White Horse to the north and the Kennet valley to the south. I sat there for about an hour, reading *Wild Life in a Southern County*, with which I had come armed—the most appropriate place in the world to read it from, as it was on Liddington Castle that Richard Jefferies wrote it and many others of his books, and as it is Jefferies' description of how he saw the country from there." Line 7: *Coate*, a village to the south (now a suburb) of Swindon, and the birthplace of Jefferies.

P. 16 (VII). *The Marlburian*, 9 October 1913. This poem is a lament over the departure of a Marlborough master, the laureate of the school, who had resigned and left Marlborough at the end of the previous summer term. The author's acquaintance with him was entirely an out-of-school one. See note on xxxvi. Line 1: *Granham hill*, on the opposite side of the Kennet from Marlborough College. The *horse* is a rather inferior specimen of the "white horses," cut out in the chalk, of which there are other and more famous examples in the Wiltshire and Berkshire downs. It was cut by boys of a local proprietary school in 1804. Line 3: *Four Miler*, the school name for Four Mile Clump, so called because it lies at the fourth milestone on the old Swindon Road; it is in the same direction as Barbury Camp and about a mile short of it. Line 19: *toun o' touns*, one of several echoes in the poem of J. B.'s school songs "The Scotch Marlburian" and "All Aboard."

P. 17 (VIII). *The Marlburian*, 10 February 1914. Oare Hill is on the north-eastern border of Pewsey Vale between three and four miles from Marlborough

College. West Woods are on the western side of the valley and nearer Marlborough.

P. 26 (x). Line 11: *Clinton Stiles* has not been identified and is probably imaginary.

P. 29 (xi). This poem was sent to a friend in December 1914. The author wrote, "I have tried for long to express in words the impression that the land north of Marlborough must leave....Simplicity, paucity of words, monotony almost, and mystery are necessary. I think I have got it at last." Sending it home, along with a number of others, in April 1915, he described it as "the last of my Marlborough poems." Line 7: the *signpost*, which figures here as well as elsewhere (pp. 76, 83) in the poems, stands at "the junction of the grass tracks on the Aldbourne [Poulton] downs—to Ogbourne, Marlborough, Mildenhall, and Aldbourne. It stands up quite alone."

P. 33 (xii). *The Marlburian*, 31 October 1912. Line 2: *Court*, the quadrangle, surrounded by classrooms, hall, chapel, and college houses, and intersected by a lime-tree avenue between the gate and C House. This house (to which the author belonged) was the old mansion of the Seymours, built in the middle of the seventeenth century, and is the only ancient part of the college buildings. Line 6: *sweat* (school slang), run. P. 34, line 1: *Four Miler*, see note on vii.

P. 36 (xiii). *The Marlburian*, 11 November 1912. Line 2: *kish* (pronounced *kīsh*), a flat cushion which folds double and is used by the boys as a book-carrier. The "bloods" (or athletic aristocrats of the school) affect garish colours (*loud and gay*) for the lining of their kishes. Line 4: *barnes* (school slang), trousers. The school rules for dress are slightly relaxed for "bloods." Line 11: *forty-cap*, for football, equivalent to about second fifteen—obtained by the author a year after these verses were written.

P. 40 (xiv). *The Marlburian*, 10 July 1913.

P. 45 (xv). *The Marlburian*, 31 October 1912.

P. 48 (xvi). *The Marlburian*, 19 December 1912  
The lines

I know that there is beauty where the low streams run,  
And the weeping of the willows and the big sunk sun,  
are perhaps the only lines in the book which recall the  
scenery of the author's Cambridge home.

P. 51 (xvii). *The Marlburian*, 25 February 1913.  
This poem, as there printed, was preceded by the  
explanation, "Early in January a man, without any  
conceivable reason for doing so, drowned himself in  
the ——. The verdict at the inquest was, as is usual in  
such cases, 'Suicide during temporary insanity.' This  
is the truth." Line 18: *river*, by mistake printed  
*river's* in editions 1 to 3.

P. 54 (xviii). *The Marlburian*, 13 March 1913.  
Line 15: *the highway and the way*, cp. Isaiah xxxv. 8.

P. 56 (xix). *The Marlburian*, 10 July 1913. The  
rookery referred to is evidently that in the Wilderness,  
lying between C House and the bathing-place, and  
visible from the author's dormitory window. Under-  
neath the trees in the Wilderness a good deal of  
rubbish (*rusty iron*, etc.) had been thrown.

P. 57 (xx). *The Marlburian*, 28 July 1913.

Pp. 61, 62 (xxiii, xxiv), entitled in the author's  
manuscript "Two Songs from Ibsen's Dramatic  
Poems." They are not translations from Ibsen, but  
the author's own impressions of the dramatist's  
characters.

P. 66 (xxvii). This poem had its origin in the  
author's journey from the Officers' Training Camp at  
Churn in Berkshire to join his regiment at Shorncliffe  
on 18 September 1914, when he arrived at Paddington  
Station shortly before the special train left which took  
the Marlborough boys back to school for the term. The

first draft of the poem was sent to a friend soon afterwards with the words, "Enclosed the poem which eventually came out of the first day of term at Paddington. Not much trace of the origin left; but I think it should get a prize for being the first poem written since August 4th that isn't patriotic." The draft differs in one place from the final form of the poem, and, instead of the present title, it is preceded by the verse, "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise."

P. 68 (xxix). Printed, after the author's death, in *The Times Literary Supplement*, 28 October 1915.

P. 71 (xxx). There is external evidence, though it is not quite conclusive, for dating this poem in August 1914.

P. 73 (xxxI). There is the same evidence for dating this poem also in August 1914.

P. 76 (xxxIII). A copy of the former of these two sonnets was sent to a friend with the title "Death—and the Downs." The title in the book is taken from the copy sent home by the author.

P. 78 (xxxIV). This sonnet was found in the author's kit sent home from France after his death.

P. 79 (xxxv). This poem was sent to a friend in July 1915. It appeared for the first time in the second edition.

P. 81 (xxxvi). The epistle in verse (fragments of which have been communicated to the editor and are printed here) was sent anonymously to J. B. (see note to vii). He discovered the authorship by sending the envelope of the letter to a Marlborough master, and replied in the beautiful verses which the editor is allowed to quote:

From far away there comes a Voice,  
Singing its song across the sea—  
A song to make man's heart rejoice—  
Of Marlborough and the Odyssey.

A Voice that sings of Now and Then,  
Of minstrel joys and tiny towns,  
Of flowering thyme and fighting men,  
Of Sparta's sands and Marlborough's Downs.

God grant, dear Voice, one day again  
We see those Downs in April weather,  
And snuff the breeze and smell the rain,  
And stand in C House Porch together.

P. 82, line 11: κ.τ.λ. (*kai ta loipa*), et cetera. Line 13: αοιδός (*aoidos*), minstrel. P. 83, line 11: *Ilsey*, about twenty miles due east of Swindon and on the northern slope of the Berkshire downs. Line 23: *the Ogbourne twins*, Ogbourne St George and Ogbourne St Andrew, villages in the Valley of the Og, about five and three miles respectively north of Marlborough. Line 26: *Aldbourne downs*, on the eastern side of the Og and adjoining the Marlborough downs. P. 84, line 4: ἐρατεινή (*erateinē*), lovely. Line 11: *Bedwyn*, Great and Little Bedwyn, about a mile from the south-eastern corner of Savernake forest and about six miles from Marlborough.

P. 85 (xxxvii). Printed, after the author's death, in *The Marlburian*, 24 November 1915. Sidney Clayton Woodroffe, killed in action at Hooge on 30 July 1915 and awarded a posthumous V.C., was a school contemporary of the author.

P. 86 (xxxviii). This prose description is extracted from a letter home. The title has been supplied by the editor. P. 87, line 24: θαυμάσιον ὄσον, wonderfully great.

P. 111. The lines translated from *Faust* are almost the only example of verse translation by the author. Another specimen, which was found in a school notebook, is a rendering of Horace, *Odes*, I, 24. It is not likely that he would have printed it himself, but it is quoted here as an epilogue to these notes.

## QUIS DESIDERIO

Check not thy tears, nor be ashamed to sorrow  
For one so dear. Sing us a plaintive song,  
O Muse, who from thy sire the lute didst borrow—  
The lute and notes melodious and strong.

So will he wake again from slumber never?  
O, when will Purity, to Justice dear,  
Faith unalloyed and Truth unspotted ever,  
When will these virtues ever find his peer?

For him the tears of noble men are flowing,  
But thine, O Virgil, bitterest of all!  
Thou prayest God to give him back, not knowing  
He may not, cannot hearken to thy call.

For if thy lyre could move the forests, swelling  
More sweetly than the Thracian bard's of old,  
His soul could not revisit its old dwelling;  
For now among the dead he is enrolled

By Mercury, all deaf to supplication,  
Obdurate, gathering all with ruthless rod.  
'Tis hard; but Patience lightens Tribulation  
When to remove it is denied by God.

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